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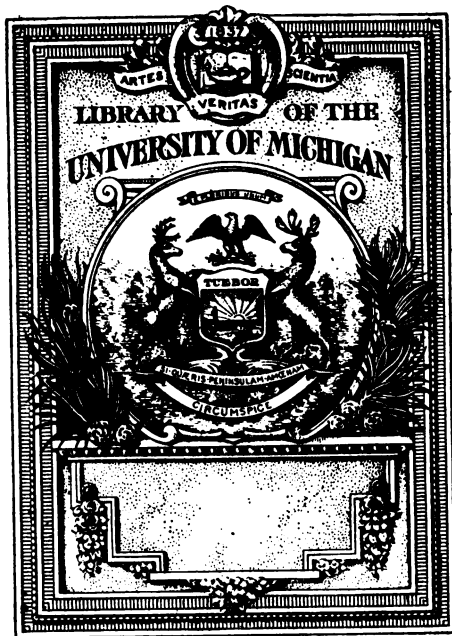
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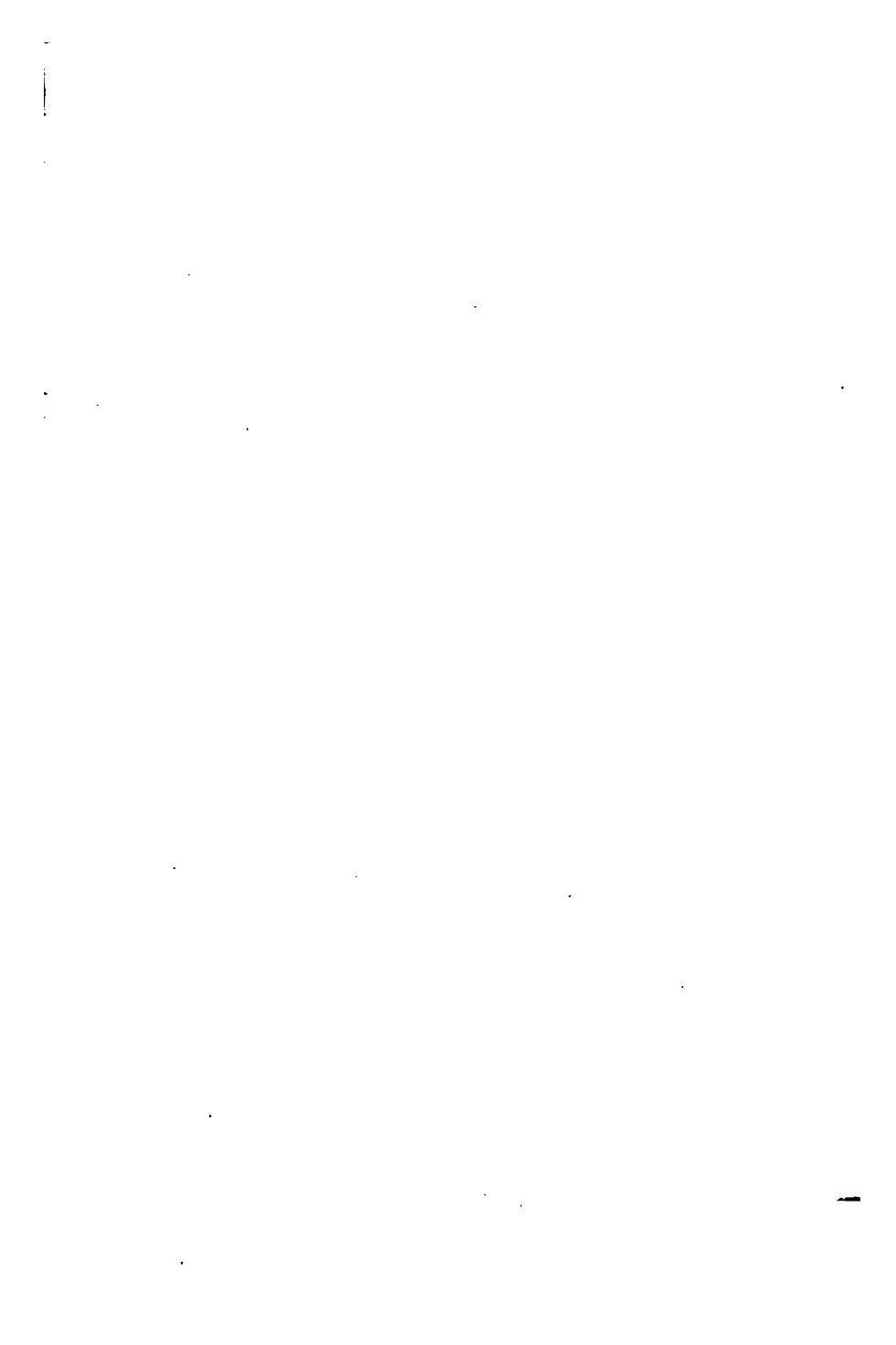
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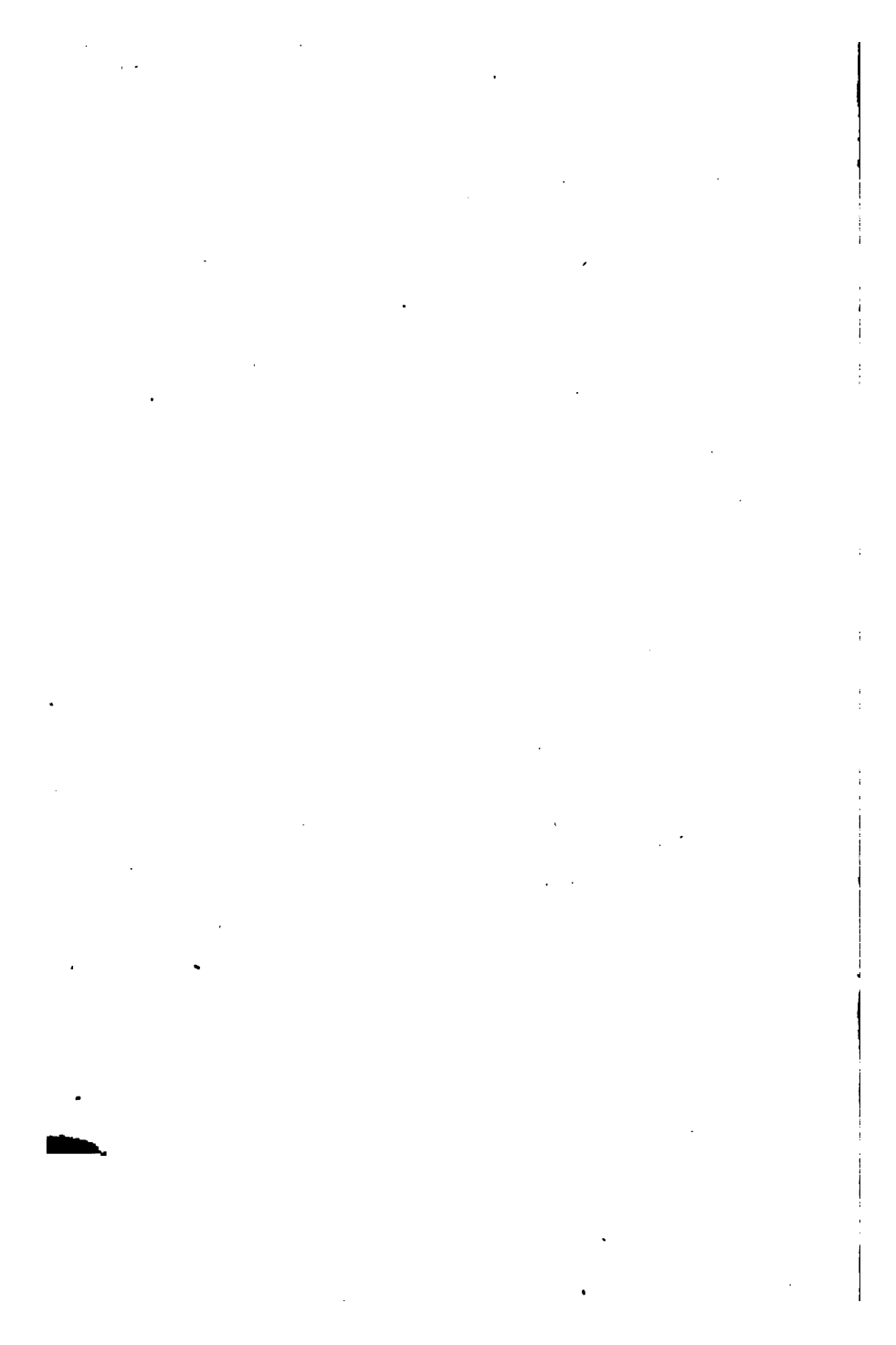
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CHILDREN
in
THE MIST

By
GEORGE MADDEN MARTIN

Children in the Mist
A Warwickshire Lad
Emmy Lou's Road to Grace
Selina

These Are Appleton Books

D. APPLETON & COMPANY
Publishers **New York**





MALVINEY

[Courtesy of Red Cross Magazine]

[Page 252]

CHILDREN *in* THE MIST

BY

True. **GEORGE (MADDEN) MARTIN**

AUTHOR OF "EMMY LOU'S ROAD TO GRACE," "EMMY LOU,"
"A WARWICKSHIRE LAD," ETC.



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FOREWORD

This group of stories is offered in no spirit of resentment against the negro, whose virtues and whose limitations are here set down. Rather, the feeling which prompts their publication is sympathetic in its would-be tender consideration of the defects apparently inseparable from their inheritance, as a race, and as an exploited people.

Flung into space fifty-six years ago by the incident of negro emancipation, without owner, understanding, or guide, to become the victims of any and all forces, political and economic, which could make use of them, struggle is too feeble a word for the groping effort which these people have made through the six decades, to sense or to glimpse, their destiny.

The tales now gathered together in this

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volume, although they were written at different times, present a chronological continuity. If they picture these dark people not only as children, but as children groping through a fog, the arraignment is not of the negro, but of his sponsor, the white man.

These dusky children are no better than the white race for the proportion of good and bad among them, and no worse. If their development is slower than their white sympathizers would desire it, it is because we who brought them into our citizenship, and under our laws, have confused for them the simple first principles, not alone of right and wrong, but of rudimentary knowledge, and every day ideas and standards.

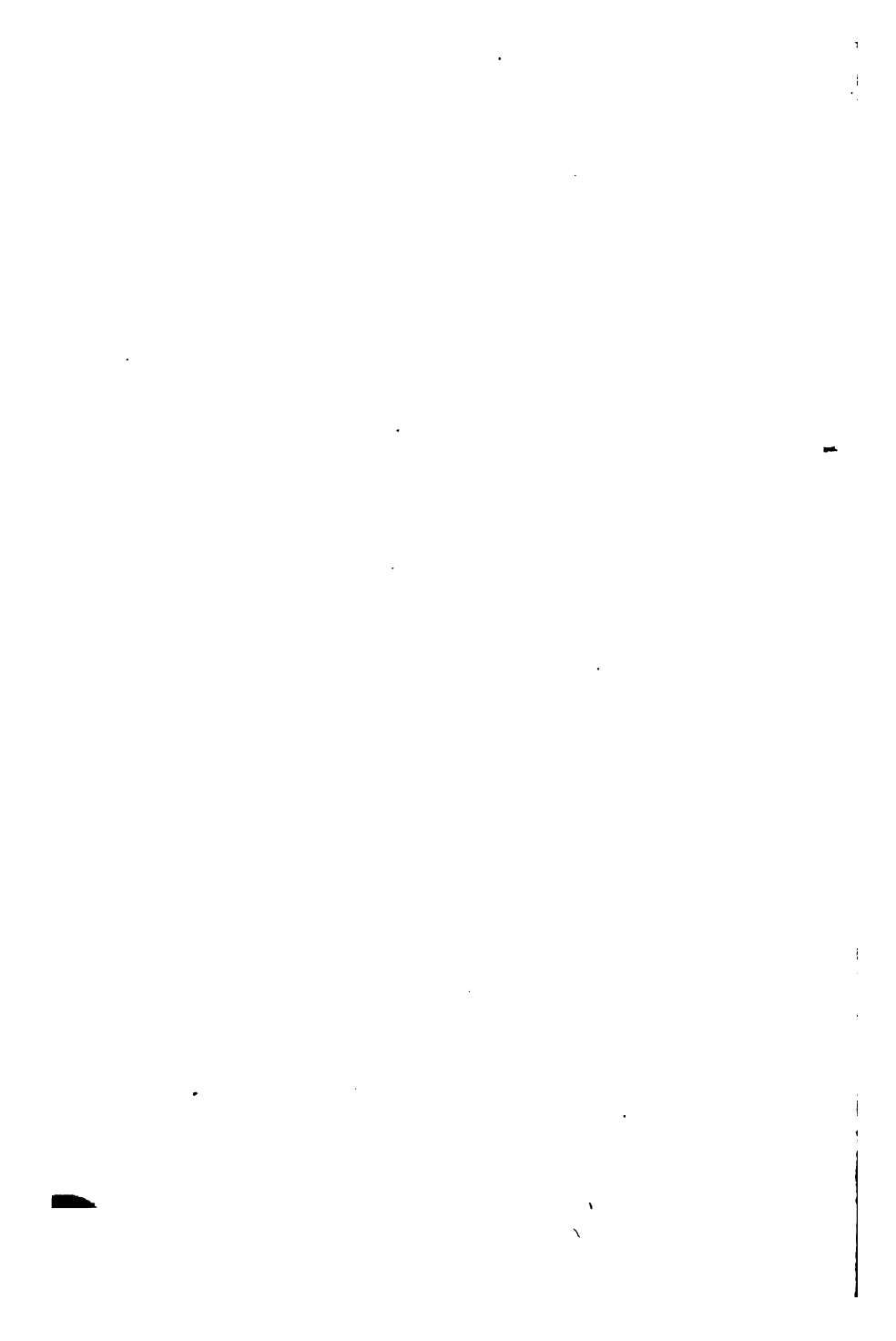
And if the tales claim too little for the negro, laying no emphasis upon those of his race who have forged ahead, the answer is that the writer has known him in the black belt of Mississippi, in Louisiana and Florida, in

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the rice-country of Carolina, and has lived side by side with him in rural Kentucky.

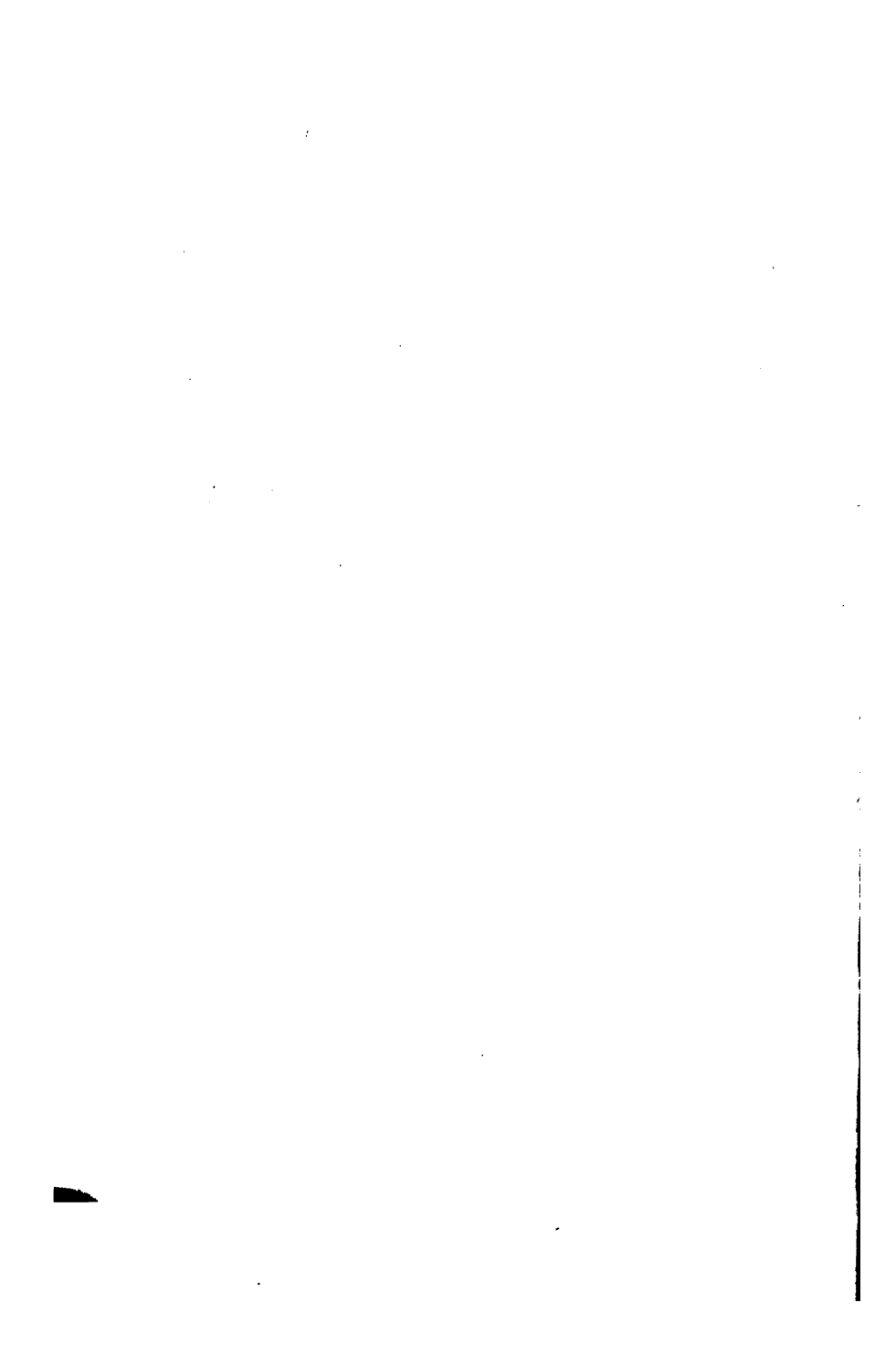
The black man in the United States has two worst enemies; the over-zealous advocate who claims too much for him, and the execrable creature wearing a white skin who says, "I hate a nigger!"

Sweet and lovable, mystified, baffled and exploited, discouraged and embittered, these hapless people, children who, after fifty-six years of freedom, still see as in a glass darkly! It is to those who, regardless of them, see them as they are that the welfare of the race can best be trusted.



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CHILDREN *in* THE MIST

THE FLIGHT

THE eight creatures, adults and children, three of them white and five colored, a huddled group clinging to one another in the center of the wide lawn, gazed at the flaming house. It was as though they were held where they stood spell-bound by the spectacle.

They had left the house hurriedly at the order of the officer in command of the blue-clad soldiers overflowing the grounds, some of these galloping about the yard on horseback, others streaming in on foot from the fields toward the dwelling.

As the evicted group left by way of the hall

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which bisected the dwelling and opened on a gallery, they had met a dozen of these foot-soldiers; one pushing by them through the open doorway, others on the gallery, and still others pouring up the front steps.

They were middle-aged men, some with mustaches, one with a beard, and each carried an armful of straw. The soldier who had passed them in the doorway and whom they pausing on the sill turned to follow with wide eyes, was heaping his truss of dry bedding against the inside framework of the door and along the adjoining wainscoting. Above this door was an antlered deer-head with a gigantic spread, placed there by the owner of the place in 1783, though the dwelling itself was thirty years older.

As the fugitives crossed the gallery, its wooden pillars upholding the plastered roof two stories above, and went down the steps, soldiers were streaming toward the house from

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the quarters. These, a village in themselves, the four large barns, the threshing-mill, the screw and winnowing-house, smoke-house, stables, carpenter-shop, forge, and other plantation buildings, were already burning.

These soldiers in their turn carried rice-straw which as they reached the house they began to pile about the basement doors and windows, the heavy soles of their boots clattering on the paved banquette underneath the gallery.

They went about the task methodically with no visible feeling of any sort as was also the case with the soldiers above stairs. It came to the oldest member of the group of fugitives, Miss Suzanne Begué who was the owner of the house, that these men were used to it; that their path from Atlanta by way of Savannah and thence north, was marked with the smoldering remains of towns and hamlets, planters' mansions and farm-houses.

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As the newly made refugees crossed the gravel of the driveway and gained the lawn, a soldier following in the wake of his mates about the paved banquette, was going from heap to heap of the piled straw and applying a handful of blazing waste brought from the preceding heap.

Midway of the wide grounds which to the right of the house sloped to the river, the refugees turned again and paused held by what they saw. The old mansion now burning fast, sat back from the highway in proud seclusion amid a noble company of live-oaks, hoary and venerable, their branches that more often than not were a hundred feet in their span, trailing long motionless drapings of gray moss to the ground.

The whole interior of the house which was wide, its façade showing seven windows across, already was illumined with a fiery brightness; while about the square wooden pillars uphold-

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ing the floor of the gallery, and about the white columns which in turn upheld the roof, red flames were crawling upward amid curling smoke. Above the increasing crackle of the fire and the crash and splintering of falling glass, a whirlwind of flame shot with a roar out a second-story window, preceded for one instant of time by a shuddering fleeing undulating length of sheer white bed-room curtain.

The fugitives so newly evicted from their home stood rooted, gazing as though they had lost all contact with reality. So rapid had been the progress of events that to themselves they were dreaming; what they apparently saw happening was in reality hallucination; they gazed upon it as upon a phantasmagoria. Turning impatiently from a mounted soldier who was addressing them, they remained motionless regarding the burning house; indifferent that he having approached them across the

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yard at a gallop, was ordering their departure with scant courtesy.

As he spoke, the flames shot through the roof of the dwelling above the ridge-pole and over-topping the chimney-stacks of brick, rising toward the sky amid a plume of red-denied smoke and fiery sparks. The gallery roof upheld until now by its row of fiery pillars, each of these columns of an incandescent brightness, suddenly fell in, the collapse being followed by a cloud of crumbling plaster, smoke and flame.

With this the group on the lawn seemed to arouse from their trance, awaking to a consciousness of the soldier on horse-back who was addressing them; looking at him without rancor or indeed much comprehension, and when he had finished, turning away.

They had their orders, these already being registered on their brains. The officer directing the operations, as soon as he had arrived,

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had sought, and had spoken with Miss Suzanne Begué, the mistress of the plantation and the dwelling-house. Miss Begué in fact was awaiting him in the hall. The enemy had come and she was there to receive him. He was elderly and fat, with a revolver in his belt, and his gray moustache bristled when he spoke. About him was the acrid odor of human sweat, rank leather, and horse-sweat, as with a rider who has been long in the saddle.

He had shown her courtesy, approaching her as the owner of Scuppernong Hall and the surrounding great plantation. And he had given evidence of much relief at learning that she had a refuge offered her in the person and the home of a niece married and established in Kentucky.

He spoke curtly at this with the manner of one whose attention perforce already is traveling from the matter in hand; and as he did so he studied a map outspread by himself

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on the floor in front of him that he might the more definitely direct her.

"Behind our advancing army as we have come up from Georgia is desolation, madam. Our orders are that we leave not so much in our wake as would sustain a crow; ahead of us we purpose the same thing. War, Madam, is hell. Some fifteen miles to the north from here is Cinnamon Court-House according to my map. The lines of our communication to the west as maintained at this moment, begin there, the railroad starting there. From that point on, using the order that I will give you, is safety for you."

He straightened up, breathing a bit heavily, the map released by his foot rolling up like a scroll. His cheeks which were ruddy, were traversed with a network of fine purplish veins.

"You will do well, Madam, you and your young nieces that you speak of, to avoid the highways and the open roads. From each

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center as we approach, our army spreads out over the countryside like an open fan, and you will find every road between here and Cinnamon Court-House held by soldiers. My authority in this military district ends with the next twenty-four hours. I move on with my men at the expiration of such time and my orders will not avail you after that. Neither can I promise you that our lines from Cinnamon Court-House will hold after to-morrow."

The group now moving off across the lawn toward the entrance-gate opening upon the highway, was, first, three adults; Miss Suzanne Begué herself, elderly, tall and slender, and of an elegant carriage; two negro women, Maum Harriet and her middle-aged daughter, Mary Pringle; next two young girls, the great-nieces of Miss Begué, by name Heloise and Isabella Gordon-Smith, the motherless daughters of a Confederate officer killed at Shiloh, thin, un-

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formed, delicately bred girls, fifteen and thirteen years of age, and both of them exquisite creatures; and lastly three dark-skinned little boys, Pompey, Alec and Cæsar, seven, six and four years old, the children of Mary Pringle.

It was significant of the character of the relations between the two races that in the hurried exodus of the flight, the young white creatures, Heloise and Isabella, clung to the two negro women; the gaze of little Isabella,—whose eyes were as dark pools set in a face like a magnolia-bud cut in ivory,—ever turning to read reassurance in the countenance of Maum Harriet, to whom she clung with both her thin young arms; the one hand of Heloise, the older girl, clutching the arm of Mary Pringle, while with the other hand she carried, pressed to her young bosom, a jewel-casket which had been thrust into her care, a thing of painted panels depicting landscapes with shepherds and shepherdesses and gar-

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lands, set in a framework of gold richly enameled.

On the contrary Miss Suzanne gave her attention and her concern to the three brown-skinned little boys. It was to the "*big house*" the trio had come on the first appearance of the soldiers, fleeing up from "*the street*" as the negroes called the quarters, the older boys dragging the younger one along, making their way through the yard, doubling and darting from point to point like rabbits in their fear of the galloping horses.

Pompey, the oldest, now carried a silver wine-coaster. Who of the adults had caught it up in leaving, or why, he could not have said. It was a massive thing, heavily wrought and bearing a crest; a piece of table furniture that invariably sat on the dinner-table at Scuppernong, holding the decanter of cape-ripened Madeira, or again of sweet Canary.

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It was early March, spring-time in South Carolina. The world about Scuppernong Hall was in its loveliest festal array. The old garden that was traversed by gravel paths, and which sloped to the river's margin, was at its loveliest too, despite the four years just past of neglect; its cloth-of-gold, Lamarque, and other roses rejoicing in their own riotous beauty; and the azaleas and rhododendron, magnolias and camellias in mid-bloom. All day the sky had been seductively and softly blue with just enough white clouds to make shadows, and the mocking-birds in the live-oaks had out-poured their ecstatic songs.

The first of the soldiers had made their appearance about the middle of the afternoon. It now was evening as the fugitives turned toward the gate, the spectacle of the flaming dwelling persistent in their minds. They were dazed and stupefied, numb with the swift-

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ness of the happening no less than with its enormity.

They must reach Cinnamon Court-House within a given time, and they must avoid the highways. Scuppernong Plantation with its four thousand acres of rice-lands and cotton-fields, bottom and uplands, lay along the curving south bank of the Scuppernong River which had its source in the great swamp two miles above.

There were two ways by which the little band could cross the river; by the ferry to which the highway outside the entrance-gate led, almost at hand. Or by the covered bridge a mile further down the flat-banked stream. Once they were across their journey would take them overland, through fields, coarse marshlands and thick woods.

Miss Begué, with these decisions in mind, turned to the two negro women. She was a tall, slender person, as was said before, with a

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dull and sallow skin, a high-sprung aristocratic nose, and sloe-black eyes. She wore a full-skirted silk dress, brown in color,—it was the day of hoop-skirts,—with a lace-collar confined with a cameo pin. So hurried had been the departure that her hair which had no touch of gray in its glossy blackness, was bare. On her feet which were high-arched and slender, she wore gaiters laced at the side, the fabric of which they were made being as fine as cashmere and their soles no thicker than paper.

Miss Begué was sixty-three years old, and the product of the social system at the base of which slavery lay. The mistress of a plantation with many slaves, so far removed from any considerable center that in the administration of it the individual responsibility was taxed to the utmost; reared under such demands and molded by such duties, she was a woman of character, resourceful and self-

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reliant, accustomed to decide and to command.

She spoke to the two negro women: "We are to go to Cinnamon Court-House, as you heard the officer say, and are to avoid the traveled roads. I will look after the little boys. One of you take the lead."

Miss Begué in saying this was giving place to wisdom greater than her own. Every slave she owned or ever had owned from octogenarian to pickaninny, had a fineness of sense she lacked; a sense of direction which led them unerringly almost as the crow flies from point to point as they would go.

As Miss Begué spoke the cords in her thin yet elegant neck swelled; otherwise her manner was calm and her voice collected. A moment since while watching the flames devour her home, she was suffering intolerable torture. It was as though her own flesh was shriveling in the fire; as though her very spirit went up in exhalation with that for which each fiery

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tongue of flame stood; each loved, and in many instances, historic portrait; each great mirror; each old French carpet; chair, sofa, cabinet, console; silver, glass, crystal, damask; richly tooled folio and quarto, laces, and fans and rare shawls. It was incredible to her that the treasures within these walls, accumulated through one hundred and fifty years of affluence, could be consumed, swept away, in one short hour. Toward the last she had stood with closed eyes trying to convince herself the thing was a reality and not a dream.

Now that the deed was done and over with, and only the red shell of the dwelling remained, she was herself, restored by the very extremity of her needs and her impotency. Scuppernong Hall was a thing of the past, and she had accepted it.

At her words challenging the two negro women to assume the lead, Maum Harriet, and also Mary Pringle the daughter, though in

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lesser degree, threw up their heads. It was as though, as a hound will do, they sniffed the elements, the while the eyes of each woman scanned the horizon as if for an objective point to make for.

Maum Harriet then raised an authoritative hand, Mary Pringle fell back, and the older woman took the lead, padding ahead toward the gate across the scant grass, the others following at her heels.

Maum Harriet and her daughter were barefooted, as were the little boys; the boys wearing each a single garment, like a shirt, of linsey-woolsey; the women being clothed in dresses of coarse cottonade. Both women wore ear-rings, huge dangling hoops of gold, and both wore head-handkerchiefs, that of Maum Harriet being of scarlet and orange. She was a hardy old woman, wiry, vigorous and erect, in years the mate of Miss Begué. Black as the human skin can be, with high

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cheekbones, and, to judge from the wisp of wool showing at the temple below the kerchief, grizzled hair, she was a person of few words, who never jested. A straight-backed old creature, head high, she moved with a swinging, swift gait at the head of the little procession.

The white mistress in her wake, well-remembered the day, it was forty-nine years before in 1815, that brought to Scuppernong the young negro wench, newly purchased in Savannah. The girl was one of a slave-ship cargo, the ship newly put in from Africa and anchored at the mouth of a creek, an inlet of the Tybee River, off the coast of Georgia. She was fourteen years old, and so was Suzanne Begué, then and since, her mistress.

A black youth by the name of Pela had been purchased at Savannah at the same time, part of the same cargo. Two years later the negro wench, renamed Harriet, had paired with this Pela Tom, the latter name having

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been added to his own, amid a wedding scene of great revelry at the quarters.

That Suzanne Begué, in her turn, had not married, was not owing to any lack of opportunities; if only that she and her sister, Mimi, the daughters of the widowed mistress of Scuppernon, were the future owners of these vast acres and the hundreds of negroes. Being young, rich, confident and beautiful, that she had lovers, goes without saying; a persisting tradition of the region being that the sisters had the misfortune to set their affections on the same person, a young planter of the neighborhood by the name of Washington Gordon-Smith. The same being the long-dead grandfather of the young girls now following with their great-aunt at Maum Harriet's heels.

Reaching the tall iron entrance-gates which they found stretched wide, the little company started out, to fall back abruptly. The highway, which they planned to follow on its brief

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course to the river-bank and the ferry, was full of horsemen who were coming in both directions.

Almost at the same instant the group in the gateway was enveloped in a fusillade of crackling sounds. Whereupon the smaller band of horsemen wheeled suddenly; one of them rolling to the ground, to remain there motionless, face downward, his riderless horse racing madly on, with bridle hanging. A moment more and the little band of Confederate guerillas was gone in the direction of the ferry, from which direction they had come, swallowed up by a turn in the road.

When the little procession moved forward again, making its way across the road which as by magic was speedily deserted, the two young girls were as white as the ribbon-belted muslin-dresses they wore, and their eyes were piteously dilated. They clung now to Mary Pringle, one on either side.

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The little boys in their turn were whimpering, the two oldest crying softly, being restrained by their very terror; the third and youngest, little black Cæsar whom Miss Suzanne was leading by the hand, bleating loudly, like a frightened lamb.

As Miss Begué reached the center of the roadway, she pushed Caesar on in the wake of his brothers, and herself approached the fallen figure of the soldier in the gray uniform.

Maum Harriet swinging about strode back, placing herself between her mistress and the prostrate body. She spoke in one of the many strange and haunting dialects of the South Carolina negroes; one of the patois which are known as Gullah; still existent and as peculiar to the region as they are unforgettable for the liquid sweetness of their utterance.

"No, my missus; no; lemme mek yo' sensible. None er him sojermans didn't bin stop. 'Ain't yo' see? Foh w'y? Dis man a' daid,

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en dey kno' he daid, counter de way he lay. Come erway, my missus. Him daid. Yo' on'erstan', ma'am?"

Padding on across the road she lifted down the rails of the fence, and waiting until the little band filed through she replaced them. Scanning the horizon she lifted a hand with a pointing forefinger to the southwest where the clear green of the early evening sky, pricked through here and there with a star, was lit by a red glow.

"Tombigee Hall," she said succinctly.

Her finger swept around to the south, following her gaze. The glow here was fainter, pulsing as it paled.

"Palmetto Manor 'bout bin burn out. Nuffin' foh we but tu git erlong. I tek yo' long de line uv de fence th'ough de fiel' tu de ferry. Aint no comfutable high baid foh my missus and de li'l misses dis night."

Ten minutes' travel in her wake, and they

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reached the fringe of reeds and willows marking the low bank of the river. The ferry, which was a long flat boat without a railing of any description, was propelled by pulling on a wire rope stretched across the stream, which was sluggish and deep. The withdrawing guerrillas had covered their retreat by cutting this wire and by scuttling the boat, which could be seen, a dim gray hulk, settling in the mud on the opposite bank.

Maum Harriet turned east.

"Tu de bridge," she said briefly.

Once the little band had gained the crest of the big field with its three-year-old stubble, and were descending the slope on the other side, the ground beneath their feet grew swampy, the soil becoming lush and boggy, patches of coarse grass marking the sunken places, and a reflected glimmer of the evening sky defining the pools. The arrow-plant up-thrust its green spear-heads at every step, and the boggy

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spots were dotted with the swamp-moccasin, coarse-striped and gaudy.

The travelers climbed the second fence. They had reached the marsh lands now which stretched on to the next highway, this being a much-traveled road that, paralleling the Scuppernong ferry-road, led in its turn to the bridge-head and the wooden bridge.

Every now and then a path emerged through the seeming morass, miry but discernible, and at these times Maum Harriet set the travelers at her heels a faster pace.

A quarter of a mile of such travel brought them to the line of vegetation, bushes and stunted trees which marked the boundary of the highway, setting it off from the marsh.

Warned by various signs and sounds, intimating to the fugitives what they would find in possession of the highway, Maum Harriet having lifted a hand in caution to those behind her, parted the masses of the leafy barrier, and the

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group behind her gazed through upon a bivouac of blue-clad soldiers established along the roadside.

They were gathered in groups of a dozen, along both sides of the highway, and as far as the eye could see; seated beside fires made of fence rails, their knapsacks cast on the ground beside them, and their guns stacked at hand. Coffee boiled in the pots over each fire, and above the embers nearest the reconnoitering eyes peering through the rank hedge, meat was sizzling in a pan.

The group behind the hedge shrank back, and the leafy boskage closed. Leaving the others standing where they were, Maum Harriet advanced along the line of vegetation toward the bridge-head, fifty yards away, parting the foliage here and there and again looking through. There were a dozen or more such campfires and such groups between that one first discovered and the bridge.

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Miss Suzanne Begué was a woman of resource and courage, in ordinary practical and determined as has been said, and accustomed to achieving her will. Sending the others back along the miry path by which they had come, she waited until she deemed them sufficiently withdrawn, then parted the leafy screen and stepped through.

Ten minutes later she rejoined the waiting group. Whatever happened in her brief interview with the officials in charge of these men holding the bridge, none ever were told. It was enough for the group to hear from her that in being refused a crossing, she was told the territory just across the bridge was disputed ground into which no woman to-night might venture.

She had found her little band waiting for her in a huddled group at the side of the boggy path.

Pompey was full of curiosity. "Missy, huc-

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come de sojer-man wuz eatin' him sweet-tettas outen we t'reen?"

The silver tureen in use at Scuppernong was at once too unique, with its great knob, and its massive handles, and too familiar an object, for Pompey not to have recognized it.

"What was the scream I heard, Harriet?" asked Miss Begué in turn.

Maum Harriet, so it developed, had been down to the landing this side of the bridge, where in times past before these years of devastating war, the rice and cotton of the region was loaded on flats and floated at tide down the river. Her thought was to find a skiff, or dug-out, left by any chance on this side.

"A yaller gal bin come bustin' up f'om de bank, screamin' foh she life w'en 'e bin ketch sight uv me een de dark. It wuz Seddon Hall's yaller Sally. 'E tol' me 'e cum ercross een er ol' skiff, en 'e said de woods on de odder side wuz full uv sojer-mans. My missus, I

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berry sorry, I kyant tek de li'l missies ober dat side dis night."

The dusk had deepened to darkness; stars were pricking through everywhere; a third and fresh red glow was pointing the circle of the horizon, this time around to the north across the river.

The spongy soil oozed about the group's feet beneath their weight as they stood; the grass and the stagnant pools about them were full of murmurs and movement; the lapping of water with the lifting of the night-wind; the rustlings of grass-blades; the cheep and whirr of insects; the croak and splash of frogs. The rank sourness of the soil, and the vaporous chill of the miasmic marsh, crept upward to them.

Isabella shivered, and with an outflinging of her arms, drooped against Mary Pringle where her young face supported on Mary's shoulder, shone like a pallid flower. The girl was just

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coming into her puberty, and, too, this last year had been racked with ague.

Mary Pringle broke the silence. She was a tall and shapely woman, a rich bright brown, still supple and graceful as a deer. From her girlhood up she had done what she called "minded child," as her mother in her latter years had done as well; that is to say they had charge of a white child at the big house on the hill.

"Is we bin goin' on? Or is we bin goin' back home? Love-bird hyere cyant trabbel much furr-er dis night. Her 'gun ter shake now wi' she chill."

Love-bird meant Isabella, Mary's charge from the hour of her birth. As she spoke her voice suddenly had become passionate.

There came a succession of ricocheting fusillades from across the river in the direction of the bridge.

"There is the answer," said Miss Begué;

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"nevertheless we must get to the railroad by morning."

Mary Pringle spoke again, looking through the dusk at Maum Harriet her mother. Her voice this time took on an odd and defiant intonation.

"Then we bin got tu get dey by way uv de swamp."

Not a sound came from any one of the group for a full long minute. Then a dry cough came from Miss Begué, and a strange odd gasp broke from Heloise.

Miss Suzanne, erect and elegant, noted always for the queenliness of her carriage, had been standing as well as moving with halting indecision. Were it any other than she, one would say she limped.

Maum Harriet stooped and lifted one of the narrow arched feet of her mistress in her hand. The gaiter was mired, was broken and pulpy, the sole torn away and hanging loose. Had

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Maum Harriet but known it, a red stain where a briar had pierced the flesh of the foot was mingling with the brown of ooze and muck on the once-white stocking.

But what Maum Harriet could see was enough. Only God knows what passed in her mind on the subject. There is every shade of difference in misfortune; that the mistress of Scuppernong should be subjected to a reverse such as this broken pitiful shoe, struck in on Maum Harriet.

She set the slender foot down and rising, prepared to take the lead as before. "Den we bin got tu git us back 'cross de open kentry 'fore de moon-up."

They went slowly this time, having to pick their way through the dark, and glancing about them on every side now as creatures fearing ambush. They must return on their tracks to the Scuppernong ferry-road, and thence make their way along the river-bank to the river's

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source, Paradise Swamp. Already it seemed to the tenderly reared white creatures a cruel and an endless night.

The three had lost all sense of time, all sense of anything but necessity and fatigue, their limbs were weighted as with lead, when having made the two-mile curve along the river as it rounded their own plantation, the black wall of Paradise Swamp, trees, undergrowth and interlaced vines, confronted them.

The swamp! Beautiful, evil and pestilential; the paradise of gaudy bloom and poisonous creeper; of fungi and toad-stool, hectic-red, leprous-white, orange, lemon and speckled; of bird, alligator and reptile; dull-hued moccasin and slow-paddling turtle; of dragon-fly, gnat and voracious mosquito; of deer and bear and panther-cat; of magnolia-tree, big-leaved and small; water-maples with their pendulous fringes of coral-red bloom; mottled sycamore, live-oak, white-oak, sweet-

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gum and wild-cherry; and predominant over all the great cypress giants rising on every side in countless columns, long-trailing gray moss drooping motionless from bough and limb to the sluggish water; this black water, now still, now moving with unctuous slow current, punctuated with a thousand rounded cypress knees up-thrust through ooze and muck. Paradise Swamp! Which outspread, with inlet and out-thrust, creek, lagoon, and morass, a malignant menace in a rich and fertile land.

The area of the swamp was all of a hundred and fifty miles. A dozen plantations touched it at some point of its irregular circumference. In places its width was no more than ten miles across; at other points the distance was easily thirty miles. The claim was that no white man of to-day, far less white woman, had penetrated farther than a mile or two into the interior, these annual venturings through many years for deer and smaller game being at-

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tended with grave dangers. The vegetation grew tall and thick over treacherous places. There were stories of other creatures than straying cattle being caught in the yielding abyss of the bog; these latter casualties being not infrequent; a Scuppernong splendid steer, a Seddon Hall pretty heifer, bogged and plunging, battling and bellowing, the buzzards gathering overhead, sucked down in the black ooze to their doom.

Yet every white owner of a black slave in the region knew that his negroes, and his neighbor's negroes, crossed Paradise Swamp from side to side at will; knew that Scuppernong negroes spent the night at Seddon Hall, with the swamp between the two plantations, and were back at Scuppernong by sun-up, and vice versa.

Every white slave-holder knew this for a fact, yet never said so to a slave; and whatever lay behind the impassive countenances of the

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blacks, never had one of these referred to such a feat, nor in all the years of the past had one been known to admit it.

The weary and stumbling little band of refugees brought up at the black wall of the swamp's edge. Maum Harriet addressed the elder among them.

"Set yo' down right hyere, my missus, en waiten 'twell de moon come up."

Stiff and with heavy movements Miss Begué and her two nieces sank down where they were, to become the center each of a moving cloud of maddening mosquitoes. The feet of all three were swollen; their bodies seemed leaden; and exhaustion had brought the two young girls to a state of apathy where nothing seemed longer to matter.

As the group sank down on the nearest root, or tussock of matted grass, Mary Pringle seated herself by Isabella, pillowing the girl's head and shoulders in her lap. Heloise, tall

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sweet flower, buried her face against the shoulder of Maum Harriet.

The little boys this last hour had trotted along, through fields and along the river bank, with amazing fortitude, and with something of the air of veterans who knew now what they were doing. Once their elders had paused and sat down, however little brown Cæsar fell asleep as he dropped, his head against the knees of Miss Suzanne; Pompey and Alec on either side as promptly snuggling against her.

As these attitudes assumed each time by the group symbolized the ties that bound the two races; the negro women protecting the white children, and the white mistress sheltering the colored ones; so did the swamp which lay at their feet, somber, furtive, mysterious and silent, stand for that which separated them.

Maum Harriet shifted the head of Heloise from her shoulder to her wide lap, the girl already asleep hardly rousing in the transi-

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tion; Miss Begué re-cradled little Cæsar. He had been a sickly child, though chubby and solid now, born three months after his father had fled from Scuppernong in '62 to join the Union forces; and Miss Suzanne more than one night had watched beside him with her tumbler and spoon and her household remedies.

For forty-nine years Miss Begué and Maum Harriet, the grandmother of Cæsar, had lived their lives side by side; forty-seven years ago the young mistress had seen Harriet married to Pela Tom, then a magnificent black giant, six feet three, supple and straight, with a tall head, and fine clean features.

Mary Pringle was the last-born of this pair, the youngest of five children. There was one son among these five, the third in the succession. Like his father before him he was an upstanding, lithe, magnificent black boy, beautiful as a piece of bronze, a lad named Ham.

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Pela Tom claimed to be the son of a king in his own dark continent of Africa; or so the other negroes reported. He at middle age was tall, sinewy, powerful and formidable. He could bend an iron bar an inch thick with a seeming flip of a scornful thumb and forefinger; he was said to have lifted a yearling steer unaided, that had fallen into a water-hole. There was an accredited story that his loon-call, a signal-cry in use between the negroes of the adjoining plantations, could carry five miles. Whatever the task, whether as plowman, or ditcher, or thresher, it was acknowledged by all that Pela Tom could double-task any other brag worker.

He spoiled his son; from the lad's babyhood no one might lay a hand on the boy; no one, white or black, save Pela Tom himself might correct him or interfere with him.

The boy reached his adolescence as lordly as he was beautiful and as defiant. He was fif-

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teen years old when the crisis came. This was in the '40's, when Colonel Washington Gordon-Smith, the husband of Mimi Begué and the brother-in-law of Suzanne, was with the American Army in Mexico.

The mother of Mimi and Suzanne now was dead, and they were the mistresses of Scuppernong and its five hundred negroes. During the absence of Colonel Gordon-Smith, the plantation was in the charge of an overseer.

There came a day when the boy, Ham, defied this overseer, Montagu; defied him openly in the face of the quarters. Montagu in turn had raised his whip, he was on horseback, whereupon the black boy sprang upon him and wresting the rawhide from the white man's hold, in his turn menaced the overseer.

"Fetch his father," was Montagu's order.

When Pela Tom arrived, coming up from the harvest-fields where the hands were 'tot-in' the rice to the flats, a superb giant of a

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man straddling a great black mule, his son Ham was stripped to the waist and tied up to the thing nearest at hand, which was a gatepost.

"A dozen lashes," so the father was told; "and you to see them given."

The first stroke fell at the word of Montagu, but never another. With something between a groan and a roar, so the story ran, Pela Tom, after the first recoil of his great frame as the lash met the flesh of his son, flung himself from his tall mule. His eyes rolled with a ferocious glitter, and his teeth glistened below the line of his bared gum and up-curling lip.

The assembled spectators with the exception of Montagu were black, including the wielder of the lash, the most of them being the women and children of the quarters. When Pela Tom flung himself from the mule he at once became the center of their interest, their silent concern, and their solicitude. None moved to stay his

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on-rush; the lash itself which was raised for the second stroke failing to descend.

On reaching the ground, Pela Tom with head down and his bull's roar, threw himself on Montagu, seizing him by the neck, which he encircled with his two great hands, pressing closer and closer, a knee braced against the stomach of the white man, the head between his hands pressed back; and back; doing the thing even gently, until by and by there followed a snap, clean, sharp and defined. The breath stopped in Montagu's body, resistance ceased, and it became lax. The man was dead.

Pela Tom, taking the body of the overseer in his arms, threw it on the ground at the feet of his son; then he picked the boy up, bound as he was, up-rooting the post as easily as the women in the fields up-pulled the cockspurs that are the menace to the pea-vine hay; and, placing the lad, post and all, across the mule, mounted and rode off.

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A year later Ham, the son, crept home one evening to his mother in her cabin; a shadow, wracked with ague and wasted with fever, to die a week later. Of Pela Tom no word was known for a certainty by any white creature of the community to this day. Della, the great black mule, had come wandering back to Scuppernong the day after the killing of Montagu.

"De moon, she up," announced Maum Harriet, and as she spoke she aroused Heloise; doing this with infinite gentleness and coaxing monotone, calling the girl honey-bird, in contradistinction to love-bird, the name given by both the black women to Isabella.

Little stolid Cæsar, on being set on his feet by Miss Suzanne, staggered but kept his footing. Isabella, on being aroused by Mary Pringle, complained of chilliness and nausea. The tiny band of travelers was ready.

The moon had appeared above the horizon in

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the direction from which they had come; a great silver-gilt paten which flooded the world, above and below, with a splendor and a brilliancy. The frogs, with its appearance, seemed to break forth with metallic notes of fury; and a great owl began to call.

Maum Harriet stepped forward to the edge of the swamp, and parting a dense mass of laurel and bay, stepped through. A moment after one heard the lap of water and the splash of a paddle. Mary Pringle in her turn parted the undergrowth, and the group went through.

Suzanne Begué, for sixty years, as child, girl and woman, had heard certain things rumored that to-night she was to see verified. Maum Harriet was awaiting them at the edge of the narrow creek, paddle in hand, seated in a dug-out, a rude canoe made from the trunk of a giant gum, shaped on the outside with an ax, and hollowed within by burning. That she had brought the group to this exact point along

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the line of the swamp, as the presence here of the boat would prove, was no accident then!

Mary Pringle passed the others down, herself following last, and taking up a second paddle as she took her seat in the boat.

Miss Suzanne betrayed no concern; she made no comments, nor asked any questions; being far too wise a member of her race to do these things. Yet her brain was busy. Were they to paddle through the swamp? There was a continuous passage then; an open waterway sufficiently unimpeded by swamp-grass, roots and vegetation; by morass, cypress-knees, and fallen trees, long moldering; by water-hyacinths and lily-pads; by overhanging cables of swinging vines! Miss Begué was to learn at last the well-kept secret of Paradise Swamp, guarded these many decades, year in and year out, by how many silent dusky creatures! A waterway! No hound can sniff the trail which

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leads him to, and leaves him at the water's edge!

News traveled with difficulty to these inland plantations after 1861. The blockade by sea, and the lines closing communication by land, were effectual. The many negroes belonging to Scuppernong were scattered; some had run away; others had permission to go; others still had joined the Union forces as soldiers, or as camp-followers. At the last these five alone were left; and neither Maum Harriet, or Mary Pringle, or Miss Suzanne Begué herself, knew that by that decree known as the Emancipation Proclamation, these five were free.

If Harriet and her daughter paddling the boat through the sluggish waters into the heart of the swamp, were thus revealing the inviolate and jealously preserved secret of their people, it was with them the act of creatures who still regarded the swamp as the Israelites regarded their cities of refuge; the act of bond-women

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who did this thing because of the stress come upon these white women in their care.

The passage through Paradise Swamp however was not to be by dug-out through turgid and inky waters, roofed by motionless lengths of trailing gray moss that brushed the faces as the boat crept under. After perhaps half an hour of paddling, Harriet and Mary put in to shore. A shelving bank it was, black with jungle, and from which the stark roots of trees and vegetation, washed clean of soil, hung gleaming in the sparse moonlight from bank to water like stalactites.

Maum Harriet, shipping her paddle, stepped out and stood waiting, ready to lead the way further. The others followed, Mary Pringle, who was the last to leave, making the canoe fast to the shore before she joined them.

Miss Suzanne, holding Cæsar by the hand, and pressing in Harriet's wake through the fringe of jungle, found herself emerged upon

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a knoll of open hummock-land, or savannah, waist-high in sedge-grass. With a whirr of wings, and a dismal squawking, a dozen heavy bodies went wheeling upward and away, their raucous cries and their manner of ascending proving them to be wild-ducks.

No more than a dozen steps were taken by Miss Suzanne, stumbling on through the waist-high grass behind Harriet, than the hummock narrowed, becoming no more than a neck of land with the glimmer and the lap of water on each side. Became a neck of land that was no neck at all but was, as Miss Begué began to see by the increasing light, for the moon was climbing the sky by now, a continuous narrow ribbon stretching ahead; winding in and out, as she was to learn, across marshes, through morass and around lagoons, linking hummock to island and island to some up-thrust of solid footing in a sea of quaking bog.

'As the eye grew accustomed to the checkered

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light and gloom, jungle blackness and white moonlight, one grasped that this winding ribbon was a road four feet wide perhaps, certainly no more, crowning an embankment with sloping sides some three to four feet high; a pathway well above the noisome waters, pitchy black, the quivering morass, or the bottomless ooze; broad enough for a single foot-traveler on a night far darker than the present one.

This was no accidental thing, this road; nor was it the outcome of any ordinary contriving; it was a work of careful and painstaking construction, a corduroy foundation of felled trees, as the eye now could see, built upon with the turfy sods of marsh-grass, filled in and surfaced with bog mud and clay, now hard and dry with time and usage.

As the gaze of Miss Begué followed the high-set path traveling the quagmire around her, looping and twisting now this way and now that, she was filled with amazement.

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When had these plantation slaves done this vast work? How many years had they been in the doing? She began to grasp how it was possible for a Scuppernong negro to appear by night at Seddon Hall on the opposite side of the swamp, and be home by sun-up.

Once the plodding line of travelers following Maum Harriet halted because of Heloise. The girl's shoe had broken and the bruised foot refused longer to bear her up. Mary Pringle tore a strip from the poor child's petticoat, and with this bound the broken sole into its place.

A second time the procession halted; little Cæsar had stumbled and fallen; and Isabella's chill had returned and with it quite violent nausea.

On the start following their second halt a dozen steps hardly had been taken when Mary Pringle dropped the arm of Heloise who was limping with effort, and caught Isabella, her

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own white child, as she crumpled and fell. The girl, no more than a tender child, tore herself from Mary's hold, and sank down on the narrow road, indifferent, unheeding, stupid with the approaching fever and exhausted by the recent nausea; clinging to the clay surface as she curled herself about, pillowing her cheek and refusing to consider the torture of continuing to move on. Urged to her feet again by the insistence of Mary and Miss Begué, the little creature overwhelmed by the inroads upon her slight endurance fainted.

The serpentine road, an incredible fact, beaten and hard beneath the feet, at the moment was following the curving shore of a small lagoon. On the one hand the jungle rose black, intimidating and dense; on the other was the open expanse of the water below and the sky above.

An expanse of sky which as the eye uplifted, was palpitating with a red glare that surcharg-

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ing the brilliant whiteness of the moonlit atmosphere, made rosy the tops of the surrounding jungle, and filled the open space above the lagoon as wine ambient and glowing fills a cup. It picked out a wraith of floating mist, firing it ruddy, and struck upon the black waters of the lagoon with a copper-red glimmer. Startled by the phenomenon, which turned each ripple red-edged, a gray alligator slid off a half submerged fallen tree-trunk at the foot of the embankment into the water; and a huge turtle went paddling off midstream. The mosquitoes, now that they could be seen, seemed more numerous and more voraciously maddening.

The glow also lit the faces of the group crowded along the roadway; Mary Pringle being seated, her feet dangling over the sloping bank, the lax young body of Isabella supported on her lap. She had unhooked the bodice of the girl's muslin dress, and was chafing now

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the one and now the other slim wrist and slender hand.

Afar off sounded that ricochet of sharp fusillades, as had happened again and again during the evening, followed by echoing reverberations. It would seem that somewhere beyond the swamp the work of torch and flame was meeting with at least temporary resistance, the resistance one suspected of that same band of mounted guerillas that had arrived too late at the gate of Scuppernong.

The sky overhead, that at first was brazen and then vermillion, had deepened to crimson.

Maum Harriet diagramed the appearance. "Yo' kno', my missus, dat's tu de norf; dey bin tuk de kentry beyon' de fur side uv de bridge, en sweep eroun' norf uv de swamp. 'E light be tu big fer on'y des Seddon Hall."

The three little boys were complaining, Caesar stating the grievance of the trio in his rising bleat:

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"W'en we all bin a eat we bre'k-us? Whar we bittles?" Bittles being the Gullah word for food or victuals.

Heloise, sweet flower, suddenly gave up, tears coursing down her cheeks. The convulsion of despair and weariness shook her young body. They heard her sob.

Miss Suzanne laid a quieting hand on the bleating Cæsar's shoulder.

"How far yet, Harriet?" she inquired, a delicate creature herself who to this night never had covered half a dozen miles on foot at any one time in her life.

"It be six miles yet tu de fur side, my missus. Come den er mile ercross 'e fields tu whar we pick up 'e railroad."

Mary Pringle spoke laconically. Her hands were feeling the cheeks of Isabella and touching her lips and forehead, at the same time brushing aside the mosquitoes. The child lay in her lap torpid.

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"Love-bird's een she fever; she ain't kno' nothin' 'tall now 'twell de sweat breaks to'ard mawnin'."

As Mary spoke, her eyes were on Maum Harriet, her mother, who was crouched on the bank beyond Miss Suzanne; the glow still persistent in the sky picking out her person; the blue cottonade dress, the swinging earrings, the gaudy handkerchief binding her head, the resolute features of her dark and non-committal face. For the moment no sound was heard but the droning of mosquitoes and the lap of water among the reeds.

What was this Harriet thinking? This creature who for fifty years had been in bondage? Was she weighing the issues for and against the thing which her daughter, through implication, was requiring of her? Weighing fifty years of custom and of habit, the affection of propinquity, and the instincts grown out of association, against the wrongs and the

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stored resentments of these same fifty years?

The safety of these three white creatures, their lives indeed, lay with Maum Harriet and Mary this night, the daughter being so dominated by the mother that she could be counted on to make no move without her, or against her.

Shelter and warmth, food and drink and rest for a few hours lay at hand for Miss Begué and her nieces, not a half mile from this spot. Harriet had revealed the slave-road, the secret of her people; to share now with her white companions a knowledge of this refuge, would be to reveal the yet dearer secret of her soul.

The slave-road ran in a half dozen ways; forking here, with a path leading toward the west-shore plantations; branching again, with a road toward the northeast and Seddon; a path in the direction of each quarter of the swamp leading sooner or later to some creek as a final outlet and a hidden canoe.

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Should Maum Harriet and Mary and the little boys abandon their companions now, Miss Suzanne and her frail charges might wander in vain, lost and bewildered, along the turnings and the branchings of the road, until their strength was exhausted.

And still old Harriet crouched upon the bank, her face impassive, her eyes gazing out across the waters of the lagoon that glimmered still beneath the red sky.

Was she remembering a burning and devastated village in a far land, the continent of her birth? Recalling a caravan of human beings, marching in file with chains on their necks, through jungle and stream, to a slave-ship on the coast? Had time effaced the horrors of the passage over? The torture of the bilboes; the darkness and foulness beneath the decks? Or softened the miseries of the landing on the Georgian coast? Or blotted out the recollection of that auction of human-flesh in the slave-

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market in Savannah? Twenty years ago this Harriet's only son, Ham the runaway, had crept home to his mother from this swamp, broken and dying of its miasmic poison and fever; twenty years ago Pela Tom, the father of her son, had disappeared into the swamp to reappear no more.

Maum Harriet gathered herself together and arose.

"Missus, lemme mek yo' hev onderstandin'. Yo' an' Honey-bird is tu come erlong wi' 'e boys en me. Mary is tu set whar she be, wi' Love-bird en li'l Cæsar, 'twell I sen' back tu brung um after."

Miss Begué arose. Again she asked no questions. If the race of which Harriet was a member is to be accepted and trusted at all, it must be taken with its reticences and its reserves.

The five, turning their backs upon the three, took up their march again along the high-

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banked narrow road trailing off into the blackness. Ten minutes of steady travel, and the path branched in three directions.

Maum Harriet took that road which led west. An eighth of a mile of further travel, her bare feet padding on the hard flat surface of the path, and she paused. Parting the undergrowth as before; spikey fronds of sword-palmetto it was this time, and giant ferns which brushed her shoulders; swamp honeysuckle, its clustering masses of bloom, white, viscid and fragrant, glossy-leafed laurel, and the small-leafed bay; she reached a brown hand and arm through. And behold, she grasped the rope which tethered a second rude dug-out to a bank.

A moment and her oars waked the waters of this new and still lagoon, the ripples running shivering over the motionless black surface, as the boat laden with the five travelers shot out from the black line of the bank into the open.

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Water-hyacinths! Trailing roots and spikey leaf and bloom! And lily-pads! Here and there a lily-bloom! As far as the eye could see and beyond! A floor of pads and stems and matted roots through which the boat forced its way! The near-by boggy shores hardly more solid than the marshy waters, were filled with murmurs and rustling of the creatures of the night, owls and bats, raccoons and 'possums.

Paddling through the sea of vegetation, Maum Harriet beached her boat at the brink of an island, an up-thrust of sweet and sound land perhaps a hundred yards in diameter, overgrown with sedge and meadow-grass and bare of trees.

Stepping out on the line of shore, and followed by her four companions, the old negress up-raised her hand. As if in obedience to the gesture, for a moment Death itself were not more still than the swamp. Another instant

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and the sharp singing of the mosquitoes would begin; the horned-owl would hoot; and a far-away wildcat scream; but for the instant there was no sound but as always the lapping of the water.

This strange loon-cry now rising on the night, cutting the silence with its dismal cadences, did not come from any feathered creature's throat; it was Harriet calling, the old slave-woman, standing at the foot of the rising knoll in the midst of the still lagoon.

Calling to her husband who already was answering her; and who, even as he replied, the cry rising and falling as it floated off into the swamp's vastnesses, came over the crest of the hummock and down through the waist-high grass to meet her.

The moon was riding high, being almost overhead, and its white brilliancy flooded the rounded hummock and fell full upon the laboriously approaching figure. It was that of

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a creature of gigantic frame, twisted and deformed by the ravages of rheumatism; the torso crouched and crooked, the long arms hanging straight, the head sunken between the hunching shoulders, and turning from side to side as the eyes roved. A huge and bony gargoyle of a human creature, with a black face heavily lined, and a terrifying aureole fleece of snow-white woolly hair and beard.

The wife advanced, meeting him halfway up the abrupt slope, and speaking her swift soft Gullah. They paused as they reached one another, he listening while she talked, and she punctuating her words with gesticulation. After which, following a parley, they came down together.

Miss Suzanne Begué and Pela Tom, mistress and fugitive slave met in the heart of Paradise Swamp, gazed at one another. The black man having in his mind a regal and confident woman of forty, still with much beauty,

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the arbiter, with her sister, of the destinies of half a thousand fellow creatures, saw before him a woman, tall and thin and dishevelled, her mired shoes broken so that the sole of one flapped loosely, her skirts knee-deep in marsh-mud, a fugitive fleeing from the desolation, and before the despoilers of her conquered land.

Miss Begué remembered a gigantic black, herculean and defiant, held to such compliance with the life around him as he subscribed to, through the power of the family-tie, the wife and children about him. She saw a despoiled creature whose grotesque body lurched with each step; its feet were bare; the cottonade breeches were in tatters; the rags of a shirt fell apart, revealing a chest and torso hairy like an animal; its breath came raucously, with hoarse rattlings in its throat; but as it gazed, the old fierceness in the lined aspect flaring up, the same glitter of the old ferocity stirring in the bleared eyes.

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Miss Suzanne Begué met the look. She spoke calmly:

"It is true, then, that you have been in the swamp these years, Pela Tom? I have taken it for granted, since the story persisted. God knows the last thing I wanted was to verify it."

He stared at her, taking this in slowly, at which his seamed face softened unexpectedly.

"Tenk 'e, Missy. Har'yet, she reckon righ' erlong dat yo' kno.' En she reckon tu, ez how her en me cud trus' yo'."

"The law of the land was against me in that, Pela Tom; it left me a transgressor, even as you are."

The head of Pela Tom lifted, and his eyes grown large and dilated, filled with a sudden proud light. Again he seemed tall and majestic.

"Missy's law; Missy's lan'. Not Pela's law, not him lan'."

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He stepped from the bank into a boat, a companion to the one Maum Harriet had paddled across in and like hers, tethered to the shore. His great gnarled hands and his over-long swinging arms suggested the simian. He unleashed the little craft and took up the paddles.

Miss Suzanne looked to Maum Harriet who explained:

“ ‘E gwine tu fotch Mary en Love-bird en Cæsar, ez I enjoin him fer tu du while I bin talk tu him yonner w’en I come. I tol’ Mary ez how she pappy ’ud be erlong back fur tu tote Love-bird een he arms. Pela Tom, he ’mazin’ strong, my missus. He kin kotch ’er wild shoat yet, en kill him wid he two bare han’s.”

She had pulled her boat up onto the shore; and here straightening, went on with her talking. “He got him a l’il’ house on de fur side er dis yere sweet-lan’ hummock. Part ub his house is dug-out, en de yudder part is dis yere

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palmetto thatch. He got him a mud en stick chimbley, en he got a hearth, whar Har'yet gwine to cook yo' a piece uv shoat right now ober de fiah, soon ez she conducts yo' dere. Me en my chillun, en my gran'chillun, we bin spen' er heap o' nights yere in we time."

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Just west of what twelve hours before had been the town of Cinnamon Court-House, to the north of Paradise Swamp, the railroad tracks began.

The town itself was no more. The flames which consumed its score of dwelling-houses, two churches, court-house, store and blacksmith shop, were those reflected in the sky above the swamp the night before.

This morning the ruins were smoking, the black mounds of fallen walls and half-burned rafters, spotted here and there with sparks and glowing embers. The belfry and spire of one of the churches had fallen across the main

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street and were still burning, bursting every little while into flames.

Standing afar off in the fields, gathered in knots and groups, were some women and children, lifting themselves up wearily, as though stiffened from the outdoor vigil of the long night. Others no doubt had fled. One wondered where.

With the sun-up another little band had come into sight crossing from field to field, the mists which overhung the low spots of the meadows, bathed with the early sunlight. Emerging from the final field, this group approached the track. The double row of rails were occupied by lines of empty freight-cars. The group drew near the embankment cut, and sat down on the sedgy stubble above the road-bed, their air being that of persons expectant, but patient before possible long detention.

Three of the group were white: Miss Suzanne Begué, and her two great nieces, Heloise

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and Isabella Gordon-Smith. The two negro women were Maum Harriet and Mary Pringle. In the one hand of Mary Pringle was a jewel-casket, and in the other a silver coaster.

Miss Suzanne Begué looked taller and thinner; her sallow face with its high-sprung nose had sharpened; there were dark hollows in her cheeks, and sunken pouches beneath her sloe-black eyes. It was when her gaze rested on Harriet and Mary, her associates of a lifetime, that her countenance became anguished.

About eleven o'clock in the forenoon a single coach and a caboose attached to an engine, came backing to the line of empty freight cars. It was the promised passenger-train connecting with the west.

The train backed slowly, announcing itself by a prolonged clanging of its bell, and repeated whistlings. As it came to a halt with a crashing rattle and wrench, an officer in the uniform of the Union army and with the straps of

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a captain, got off, followed by a detail of soldiers.

The group by the side of the track had risen and was approaching the train. Miss Begué handed her slip of paper to the young captain.

He scanned it, and scanned the group. "Who are these negro women? Why are they with you? They are not mentioned in this order."

Mary Pringle spoke for her mother and herself. "We bin come erlong tu see Missus, en l'il Missies safe on de cyah. Den we gwine back 'twell sech time ez Missus comes tu fotch us."

The young captain spoke briskly. "You needn't worry about being fetched. There's no longer any of that, you see."

Mary Pringle looked at him with mystification written on her bright brown face.

"We're Missus' folks, you know," she said, not understanding.

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"I guess not," said the brisk young officer; "that's over with if you don't know it. You're Missus' folks no more."

Missus' folks no more! The arms of Love-bird, Mary Pringle's own white child, pale little Isabella, unclasped from around Mary's neck.

Honey-bird, Maum Harriet's own Heloise, tall and exquisite young creature, lifted her face from Harriet's broad bosom.

Tears rolled down the cheeks of Miss Suzanne Begué. It was the two black women who alone did not understand.

A moment later and the three white creatures were aboard, and the apology for a train had started moving slowly.

The faces of Miss Begué and her nieces appeared at a window of the one coach; the gazes of the two negro women were up-raised.

As the train gathered speed and moved onward, the two negro women turned and started

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back, returning as they had come from field to farther field toward the line of the swamp. Pela Tom and the children were there awaiting them. Three generations these, flung into space without substance, understanding or guide, the uncharted future before them, they were Missus' folks no more.

THE BLUE HANDKERCHIEF

AS TOLD BY LOUISE PREVART

I

SINCE mulatto Livy had been taught to regard the human chattel as transferable property, I can see now, looking back to that far time, how she doubtless considered that she was plainly within her rights when she gave away her child Susy, aged six.

In the phrase of the South where this happened, Susy was termed "colored." Not for one moment of the years that I knew her did she herself accept this classification.

Fifty years have passed since she lived that pitiable thing, her childhood. Pride of race is being preached, and has awakened among the people she was conceded to belong to. Under

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conditions such as these, a Susanna or a Miriam or an Esther might have been saved in her to that race.

As it was, since she herself fiercely repudiated the claims of this race upon her, and the other race to which the white blood in her answered repudiated her, she was driven back through the only escape offering the proud and fierce spirit which characterized her.

To call Susy either white or black or both is only partly true. She was the child of Livy, a slattern mulatto woman who did washing for the soldiers at the barracks still maintained in our town in the early '70's. But her father was Injun John Smith, of the broad face, the wispy long coarse hair, the shawl, and the big rolling hat, known to us as a camp-follower and hanger-on.

About the time that Susy was six, he and Livy had drifted in from no one ever seemed to know where. Soon after Livy proffered her

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to one Aunt Haggai Mountjoy, a straight, spare black woman, cook in the kitchen of my parents.

Aunt Haggai, efficient, saving of words and non-committal, as a servitor was hardly to be overvalued. As a proprietor in a piece of human flesh, she was to prove hard and cruel, loving power for its own sake.

At the time of the transfer of Susy, Aunt Haggai came to my mother, bringing the matter. Slatern Livy, barefooted, in a calico dress and little else, and this sagging and open, exposing her person, followed.

Behind her, plainly a baffled, hounded and impelled, yet fiercely alien small creature, came Susy.

I can see her now. The bright hue of her watchful and fierce face was copper. Her cheek-bones were high, and the hair which hung in two small braids down the back of her tattered cotton dress, with a yellow ribbon known

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as cigar ribbon woven in with each, was straight and blue in its blackness.

I can remember, too, how her eyes roved about the room, with its canopy-bed, bureau, armoire, and little sewing-table, and came to a pause upon the lady in the muslin wrapper lying with a book upon the sofa—came to a pause there, and then swept on to me standing by the sofa's head beside that person, who was my mother.

And if I, the little daughter of the household, who was exactly of an age with Susy, looked back with some awe at this fierce, small creature, it was not without a degree of fascination, too. Indeed, I may say here that it was largely with these two emotions I continued to regard her to the end.

I am quite sure now that my mother from her sofa endeavored to do her duty and her part. The stress of the war was just over. Its personal toll and its heavy hand, laid upon

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every one, had left the emotions jaded and inelastic, at least in such a matter as any very active curiosity as to why mulatto Livy desired to transfer her child to Aunt Haggai, or as to why Haggai desired to burden herself with the child. There had been a too general and enforced readjustment among families, white and black, and a redistribution of responsibilities of all kinds, for that.

Still, a sense of responsibility toward the black in any and all matters, especially of appeal, was yet ingrained and in the order of things. And I am sure that my mother must have been convinced that the transfer was wise before she became a part in it.

For it was then and there effected, and Susy's childhood and early adolescence from this hour when her mother gave her away were lived under the roof of my mother and my father, side by side, so far as the lines drawn allowed, with my own.

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I was Louise; she was Susy. I had a wax doll; she had a china one. And if I had toy dishes and other such matters, she played with them in equal sharing. And not only did she play with them, but with the white children of the neighborhood who came and joined us in that scene of our play, the back yard.

The back yard! It is borne in upon me to repeat this. For it was the distinction belonging to the established order, before which we were as powerless as she, that Susy the companion and indeed the dictator in our play in the back yard, might not be included in any way whatsoever in our games upon the front sidewalk.

She the born leader, and the dominant will in all our affairs up to that line of demarcation called the fence, must stop there and from behind its pickets, at that entrance known as the side gate, stand and watch us. Poor little peri,

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other side of the palings of a forbidden paradise!

As I recall her small copper-hued face as it used to look out upon the rest of us, as we sat or played, fresh in our summer-evening array, I can see that the fierceness of a potential race hatred was awake in her even then. How cruel God's creatures are! We of the privileged race played on without conscious thought about it other than as the accepted thing.

In so far as Susy regarded me, both then and afterward, she was tolerably well disposed toward me as an individual; but as one of the race she hated she had no good for me. Her distinction between the two identities was curious. I enter into these things because they seem now to shed light on what comes hereafter.

As the little companion of her daily intercourse, she vouchsafed me occasional glimpses

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Why? I think because in our ways we must have felt something of Susy's side of it, have caught a glimpse of some aspect of her share in the tragedy.

But these instances were concerned with the less tangible matters that surrounded her. There were more direct things that had their part in making her fiercer and more alien than she by nature was already.

I have never been able to reason to my own satisfaction why Aunt Haggai took Susy. The amount of work she rendered in return was not of sufficient moment to explain it.

Susy cleaned the steel table-knives on a square of board with a bit of potato and bath-brick. She turned the coffee-mill sullenly. As she grew older she swept out the kitchen and set the breakfast table. I do not recall having seen her washing or wiping dishes, perhaps because her school-hours interfered.

She never appears to have been unjustly

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overworked, yet to us white children she seemed a little Israelite in Egypt, compelled to servitude and bondage.

True, she always dodged if compelled to pass within reach of Aunt Haggai's heavy hand, and, alas! not without good reason. And after one of these blows on the head or the cheek, or wherever it caught her and sent her reeling, I have seen her flash back upon the old woman such a baleful look of hatred as I believe held murder in it could it have killed.

More than once she disappeared, always to be returned to Aunt Haggai; and while nothing was ever said on the subject of these absences, it came to be commonly understood that on these occasions she had run back to her parents, who as regularly returned her.

She gave me glimpses, never confidences. She and Aunt Haggai went off at night to their sleeping-quarters of one room somewhere in a negro neighborhood, and returned at morn-

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ing, and of these intervals she did at moments speak.

Unhappy Susy! She would secretly pull up a sleeve or lower a stocking and show me scars and livid welts and bars. And furtive as she was of any actual confidence further than the showing of these, somehow I gathered they were put upon her by Aunt Haggai in an excess of cruelty altogether disproportionate to the offense.

Certainly there seemed no trace of the maternal to explain this person's ownership in the child. I have never been able to account for it on any ground other than that already mentioned—gratification in the lust and exercise of power. This may seem hard toward an otherwise faithful and efficient old woman, yet how else shall her undoubted cruelty be explained?

On the other hand, so far as material oversight went, Susy was scoured. I use the word advisedly. And she was combed. And also

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her few and simple garments, which came to her from the wardrobes of my elders and myself, were washed and ironed with exactitude and regularity until such time came when she was stood on a box before a tub or ironing-board and told to do them for herself.

She was sent to school with scrupulous observance, and at home was made to take her stand upon the kitchen floor and read her book to Aunt Haggai. And if she faltered, Aunt Haggai, who herself could neither read nor write, took down the switch from behind the kitchen clock. She also took Susy with her regularly at night to her church, and kept her a member in a juvenile lodge in good and paid-up standing.

It was a curious relationship, this between the old African-blooded woman and the mixed-breed Susy. The one explanation I ever heard made for the animosity that existed between them was made by old Haggai herself. It was

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on the occasion of a whipping I stumbled upon in the woodshed, and, because of its terrible severity, reported to my parents. Aunt Haggai's defense, when summoned by them in account, was outspoken and not servile.

"I was whuppin' the Injun out er her," was her justification.

I have found since that my elders were easily vague about what really happened below stairs. Susy was fed and clothed at their expense, she was given occasional bits of money, and she was remembered at Christmas. If Aunt Haggai whipped her at times, no doubt she needed it. I have asked since if I never pleaded Susy's cause.

"Yes," they say; "but as a child you were given to a mere statement of fact. No doubt you did say, since you did come to us, that Haggai whipped Susy. But while your knowledge of all the circumstances made this graphic in your mind, it probably seemed to us

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nothing more than the simple statement of an ordinary act."

Well, it all happened so, and there is no help for it now. There were potential qualities for great leadership in Susy. We of her white blood failed her, they of her black blood maltreated her. I think I now have shown you why she was driven to escape through the third blood in her fierce veins.

The story of that ultimate return or self-elected atavism of this driven creature begins here, and also the story of the so-called blue handkerchief.

II

When Susy could get away from her by no means overheavy tasks in the kitchen to us awaiting her in the back yard, I think she must have had her moments of satisfaction. I come now to one of her greatest holds over us. She was a baleful, occult creature when she wished

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to be, and used to scare the wits out of us by her grim recitals. And again she would hold us enthralled. She had imagery and she must have had some command of language. She was no mean creature, for hers was the gift of the born story-teller.

It was a long, narrow, and grassy back yard, with a pavement down the middle; a pleasant-enough place, with oleanders in tubs, a Madeira-vine, a cypress, and a gourd-vine running along the fence.

There were innumerable pleasant corners in that yard, too, as I remember—by the rose-bush, around the swing, or even by the tansy-bed. But, no; in the remote end of the yard against the stable the ground was dank and lowest. Here dock grew, with its rat-tail-like tongues of seed, and flesh-pink smartweed; and here, possibly because it seemed more remote and secure from Aunt Haggai in the kitchen, Susy would lead us.

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Her procedure was always the same. As-signing us in her dominant way to our places in a circle about her, she would cast a warn-ing and intimidating glance upon us, *shut her eyes*, fold her hands upon her lap, and be-gin.

"Why do you shut your eyes?" we asked her, and for a long time asked her in vain.

In time she told us—that is, told Geordie, the round-eyed little boy from next door, Ione from across the street, and me, the three whom she elected to honor beyond the rest.

"I read it off my lids."

"How do you know how, Susy?"

"Injun John showed me. It's written there. *I'm a Manco Capac*. It's always written there for them. Papa Manco Capac was my first father. Mama Oello was my first mother. Injun John would kill me if he knowed I'd tol'."

Injun John! Ah, now you begin to under-

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stand what it was that Susy for so long ran back to!

Not to Livy, her half-negro, half-white mother, not to the blood which had delivered her into Aunt Haggai's hands. I went with her many a time on some trumped-up excuse, called an errand, to the shack behind the barracks where her parents lived. A one-roomed shanty it was, with a mud-and-rock open fireplace wherein swung a round-bellied black kettle. Its window boasted no glass, and its door hung on one hinge. Its bed was minus some of its slats, too, I graphically recall, so that the filthy mattress bulged through.

And oftentimes Injun John was there, sober, amiable, and disposed to take notice of us. At other times, black of mood and evil of eye, he would be there, true, but brooding over a pipe or hunched together gazing into the fire. And again, when he was altogether drunk, he would be rolled in the tattered bed-quilt and

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asleep on the bed or the earth floor near the fireplace.

At all times there was sullenness in his face; but there was a certain power, too. He was a muscular, catlike man rather than a powerful one. And his eyes were given to quick turns and glances, as with a person who fears surprise.

"He's waiting," Susy once told us.

"Waiting for what?"

But she would not say.

Another time she spoke of herself in relation to him. "He wouldn't have let Livy give me away if I hadn't been a girl."

"Why?" we begged her.

But she only shook her head.

And these stories she told us in the back yard, and which she had from him, had always to do with Papa Manco Capac or Mama Oello in some form. She was twelve years old before she stopped telling them.

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Within doors we white children heard the usual tales of the nursery and the Bible; through our negro nurses we met Br'er Fox and Br'er Rabbit and their kind: but I do not think we ever confused the differentiations of any of these. To this day Susy's stories of her great Papa Manco Capac and Mama Oello remain apart for me in their own stories and settings.

But the thing I cannot remember, curiously enough, is the diction or idiom of Susy. I can see her copper cheeks with their high bones, and her straight hair, and her fiercely furtive and watchful eyes. I even can see the scar running from the edge of her temple back along her skull, supposed to be hidden by the hair combed over it, where her father shortly before she came to us, in a drunken rage at her because of her sex had thrown her into the fire against the irons, or so we had gathered somehow.

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But her language I cannot recall. I can only retell what she used to tell us after the fashion that has remained in my mind.

III

Papa Manco Capac and Mama Oello were good. People were poor and used to run on all fours and eat roots before they came. They came from where? Why, stupid, from heaven, of course. From where else?

Papa Manco Capac smiled, and his smile sank into the earth and warmed it. And Mama Oello stirred the ground with her finger, and things awoke in it and answered her and grew.

Papa Manco Capac took a stick and dipped it in tar and drew lines, this way and that, over earth and rock, from cliff to cliff and from river to river. And behold there were roads climbing and descending. And Mama Oello filled

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her lap with mighty spiders and going along these roads tossed her giant spiders spinning as they went forward and back, from side to side across these rivers and these cliffs. And behold, like cradles swung between, there were bridges.

At the time Mama Oello stirred the ground with her finger, a plant came up. And Mama Oello twisted the snow of the blossom of that plant, and behold she had thread.

And Papa Manco Capac took seeds washed upon the sands of that land by the waves, and cast them upon the earth. Out of the plants sprung from these Papa Manco Capac made a dye of the sea's own blue, and dipped the thread therein. And Mama Oello wove the dyed threads to and fro into cloth of clear blue. And she taught the people.

Papa Manco Capac walked forth high into the world of rocks among the clouds, and he came back bringing a creature by the horns.

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And its fleece was neither hair nor wool, and it shed water. Twisted into a thread, it glittered.

And Papa Manco Capac took of the countless creatures on the leaves of the tuna-plant, and made a color like the sun's own blood. And he dipped therein a strand of the fleece that was neither hair nor wool.

And Mama Oello wove these dyed strands from the horned sheep-creature into stuffs that were light and warm and shed water. And she taught the people.

Papa Manco Capac went up again into the cloud-lands—even unto the highest rock known to all that world—to pray. So high was it that it took the dark of two moons and the light of the same to reach the spot which was nearer to heaven than any other. For Papa Manco Capac had taught his little children that the souls of men should draw thus near to heaven once in a lifetime at least.

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And to show his people that he had been there, over the awful passes and rocks between, Papa Manco Capac brought back two feathers, black and white, one each from the wings of the cora bird, which dwells in pairs, one pair at a time, and only there. And Papa Manco Capac taught the people to pray.

It was a mighty country. And its people were called the children of the country of the sun.

Papa Manco Capac called for a three-days' fast for his people. It was the Fast of Thankfulness. And Papa Manco Capac came forth in the rays of the rising sun before his assembled people. And his head was dressed in this way: about his forehead and his straight-cut hair in a folded band, was a head-cloth made of the woven thread that was dyed to the blue of the sea. From the head-cloth and reaching to his eyebrows hung a sun's-blood fringe—of the fleece that was neither

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hair nor wool. Erect in that sea-blue band, above that sun-blood fringe, were two feathers, black and white, from the wings of the cora bird, which of all creatures lives nearest to heaven. For from these three things had the happiness of his little children come. And he and they kept the Fast of Thankfulness.

And when at last Papa Manco Capac came to die and go back to heaven, and Mama Oello claiming that she could not stay without him went too, they left their son, little brother Manco Capac in their place to stay and take care of the people and to come out before them in the appointed head-dress at the Fasts of Thankfulness.

And when in his time little brother Manco Capac came to die and go to be with them, he pointed with his finger to the one of his sons who was to rule and take care of the people and wear the appointed head-dress.

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And this son in his time pointed in the same way to the son he had chosen and this one in turn to his. Thirty times the fingers on Susy's hands, she always told us at this point, it had come from Papa Manco Capac, son to son—down to Injun John!

"And then to me," said Susy. "I am a Mama Oello Manco Capac!"

But it was not a great country any more.

"The white people came," Susy told us, briefly. "Manco Capac's people had to work for these, had to go again on all fours."

But Manco Capac was not forgotten, for all that. Unknown to the white people who came and took that country, he rules from chosen son to son among the Manco Capacs still.

Or did until now, when Susy was telling us. Injun John was the true Manco Capac, head of the children of the country of the sun. But bad big brother Huaco sought to kill him,

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and he, escaping, brother Huaco is the head of them instead. Until when? Until the call comes when Injun John will go back.

And will it come? The call? So far across rivers and countries and sea? Of a surety. When bad brother Huaco can no longer prevent the three-days' fast of the people from being held again, it will come. For now the children of Papa Manco Capac sleep in their forgetfulness, and are content to go upon all fours. But every now and again some among them awake, and call for the long-forgotten fast. And then! When bad brother Huaco can no longer prevent this fast, then the call will come, and Injun John will go.

Why? Because the true ruler must be the possessor of the blue handkerchief head-cloth. And at the three-days' fast he must come out before the assembled people, with the rays of the rising sun upon him, and the banded cloth about his forehead.

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IV

This was the favored story. Susy often elaborated it. When the white people came and took that country, their hunger was for gold. And the snow-blossoming plant died. For the children of Manco Capac had to work for these new masters in toil for gold. And the sea-blue dye plant died.

And there were none left, either young or old, to keep up the wall fences of rock, or the osier fences of twigs and branches. And the horned sheep-creatures escaped back to the rocklands of the clouds. And there was no more need for any sun's-blood dye.

And since Manco Capac's little children were slaves now and must go upon all fours, they could not climb up to the rock nearest heaven to pray. And so in time it came to be that the one square of blue cloth, and the one tasseled sun's-blood fringe, and the two feathers from the last Manco Capac's journey

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to that far prayer-peak, which were used to dress the head of their Manco Capac ruler, were all that remained to the children of the country of the sun, of the things which had made their happiness and greatness.

And in time the two feathers fell away into dust, and none know where to journey to the high peak for more. And in time the sun-blood fringe frayed to rottenness and fell to nothing. And none know how to card or dye or spin or knot it more.

But worn about Injun John's body that night he escaped from the hands of bad big brother Huaco was the square of blue cloth of the plant and the dye, and the thread and the weave, now lost to the little children of Manco Capac!

And Injun John had guarded it since with life itself, waiting for the call which would come when the people found the false Huaco did not have it.

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V

Such in substance were the things which that strange child Susy used to tell us. There were many tales, but the story of the blue handkerchief, as she herself called it, came first and oftenest. Could this have been because Susy established her claims in telling it, and because as it were, we in listening, allowed these claims? And then came the dramatic happenings which seemed to substantiate her claims.

There came a morning when she summoned us earlier than usual to our gathering-place in the back yard. There was Geordie, Ione, and myself. We must have been somewhere about eleven years old, the four of us. It is evident to me now that she was driven to tell us from the dire need in every human creature to tell somebody.

Susy still wore that badge of her youthful servitude, a high-necked and long-sleeved

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checked cottonade apron. Unrolling the skirt of this, in which her folded arms were wrapped, she held forth something to our gaze as we gathered about her. The very significance of her action made it clear: it was the blue handkerchief!

I can recall every aspect of it. Somewhere near the clear blue of cobalt in color, in texture it was of a hard, clean, round thread, slightly metallic in the appearance of the fiber and the luster. The weave was diagonal and singular, and the whole worn to the grain and frayed to an irregular fringe at its edges by time.

And Injun John always slept with it beneath his head by night and wore it upon his person by day, if we believed Susy!

"Oh, how did you dare?" we asked her.

"I'm so scared for you," said Ione, our youngest.

"It's mine," said Susy.

"What?" We stared.

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"He's dead—Injun John."

Then we saw that her small face was gaunt and fiercely set.

"It happened on the common," she told us, "outside the barracks. Livy found him this morning, with a knife-blade in here."

She showed us where. Our hands doubtless stole there on our own small persons—below the breast, between the ribs.

"He knew they were after him. He said so. There were three of them. They been playing in a band at the summer show at Woodland Garden. That's the way they traveled looking for him."

It proved to be true that such a strolling band was in town. It called itself a Mexican orchestra. For Susy had to be taken to our parents with her story, we knew enough for that.

But the three mandolin-players on whom her unsupported accusation rested had disap-

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peared, and nothing ever came of it. Whether the story of the blue handkerchief figured in the public airing of the matter, we white children never knew; but I fancy not. The gruesome happening and Susy's part in it were taken up higher into counsels of which we knew nothing, and we heard very little more until she was back among us.

"He knew they were here," she told us then, on our solicitation. "And he knew what they wanted—the blue handkerchief. Bad brother Huaco had sent them hunting it. Injun John tried to get away as soon as they came to town; but they were watching. So he came back to the barracks and hid; and they found him and killed him. But"—and she gathered us about her with a look as her voice fell—"they didn't get it. No-sir, not they. He knew what was going to happen. He'd given it to me."

Little by little she told us more. Wonder-

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ful and strange little creature, telling us, and yet hating us for what we were!

“Injun John never thought much of me because I was a girl; but when he come to give me the handkerchief, in case they should kill him, he told me a Manco Capac woman had been head of the people once before. And that I would be their Mama Oello Manco Capac when he was gone. And I am!”

It is curious that we seem to have confided so little of all this to our elders. It may be that Susy bound us, though I cannot remember it. Or it may be that we did talk more about it than they will allow. I have found concerning elders, since becoming one, that they all too often give a tolerant, good-humored ear to children, which listens but does not always hear. And, again, with our poor powers of reproducing it would have made a childish tale to which they could scarcely have been expected to listen.

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VI

Susy and I were twelve, or possibly entering upon our teens, when she came to me one day with her geography. She was a passably fair enough student when she wanted to be.

"Injun John come up through here," she told me, her finger sweeping across the pink area of Mexico.

About this time she showed me, too, a mark on her arm where Aunt Haggai had beat her. It was the last time that it happened so far as I know.

"I could kill her," said Susy with perfect calmness.

When she was fourteen they both left us. Aunt Haggai had saved enough to become the owner of a one-roomed house, and retired to take in washing. Almost immediately following this Susy left her.

The agreement was mutual, so we heard,

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Susy going to live with the colored sexton of one of the white churches and his wife, who was a teacher in the colored school. How this came about I do not know, except that Susy was fiercely scornful of any but the best among that race.

So far as Aunt Haggai's consent to this went, there were rumors that she had come to be afraid of her long-time victim, and was more than willing she should go.

Occasionally after this I would see Susy on the street, and we would stop and exchange a word. We both were fast-growing girls, she fiercely and sullenly handsome, with a promise of early womanhood. I remember that I proffered her various of my personal belongings, hats, dresses, and the like, if she wanted them; but she never came for them.

The year the Southern Exposition was held in our city Susy and I had reached sixteen. I came on her here in a booth in the section

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given over to freak novelties. Her part seemed to be to keep the small inclosure in order, with its show-cases and wares, and to price the articles for customers.

The proprietor of the booth was a small, swarthily good-looking young Mexican, so-called. Working the treadle of a machine with his foot, he turned out these articles from a vegetable ivory, while the spectator watched.

The last piece of confidence I had from Susy was in a brief word over this counter.

"He knows the people I belong to. He's not Mexican," was what she told me.

Six months later when, at the close of the exposition, he departed, Susy disappeared. The sexton and his wife seemed to think there was no doubt she went with him.

And then I altogether and for many years forgot her except as a part of the background of a far-receding childhood.

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VII

It was years later. I was a long-time married woman, and convalescing at the moment from an illness, when the events I am now to relate happened.

After a lifetime's intention to read a certain two-volumed book, I unexpectedly, even to myself, asked for it one evening during this convalescence. It at once enthralled me, as it has thousands before me and I marveled that I had so long delayed in knowing it. It was Prescott's "Conquest of Peru."

I was reading on a couch under the light. My husband was near by. Suddenly I exclaimed, handed the volume to him, and sat up. I was excited and incredulous.

"Take the book! Look, please, at the chapter I have just begun. I—I know it! I have heard it before. Let me tell it."

And in a way I did know it—knew the peo-

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ple of that country, with their red-gold-tipped spears, their red-gold shields, their feather canopies and panoplies, their industries and agri-cultures. I knew them crudely, and told of them.

And I knew more—of the gardens set with gold-and-silver-wrought flowers and maize; of the image on the wall of their temples facing the east, with its human countenance on the disk of gold, looking forth from innumerable rays, an image called Manco Capac.

And as I said this name I caught my breath as the clew came.

“Then it was Peru her father came from. She was an Inca—Susy!”

And thereupon, for the first time, I told my husband about the little servant child in our household.

And now comes the end. My husband, a colored driver, and a friend were with me when it happened.

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Late one afternoon, in their company, I was taking my first drive after my illness. The carriage was an open trap, and the locality is near that same city where I was born, and which is on a river tributary to the Mississippi, and so to the Gulf of Mexico and its outlets. We were well identified with the neighborhood, and it would have been perfectly simple to find us, and to be aware of our movements, had any one cared to inform himself of these beforehand.

We were turning at our club-house corner, there being only one road from our gate to this point, when, presto! the macadamized highway we turned into was alive with a halting cavalcade of wagons and gayly trapped ponies, swarthy people, chatter, color, and bustle.

I became fixed in the idea that they were gypsies. I am not justifying this stupidity; I am setting down what actually happened.

It was a long train—six showy house-wagons with prosperous ponies and several outriders.

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These had halted at the side of the highway, and a group of women, girls, and children were in the road. One of these girls, a dark, smiling creature, with swinging earrings, as big as small oranges, that almost touched her shoulders, immediately detached herself from the others and came toward us, her teeth a-glitter, her smile gleaming, and, as she reached the carriage, a begging palm out.

As we stopped, the better to view the whole picturesque company and to give her a coin, a boy of not more than five approached on the other side. He wore long, fringed trousers, a beaded shirt, and a small sombrero on his flowing black hair. He was smoking one cigarette and wanting another and a match, as he made clear to my husband by cleverly impudent pantomime and a word or two of broken English. My husband, amused, supplied him.

Whereupon,—was it at a touch or a word or a presence?—I turned. At my side of the

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carriage stood a voluptuously and barbarically impressive woman.

Brazenly and indifferently the red-and-black calico waist, the single garment on her upper person, fell apart as she leaned or swayed, showing the pendant breasts of oft-bearing maternity. And between these breasts dangled some charms on a leather string, of which I recalled later a tiny figure carved in turquoise and a scarlet, spotted bean. Silver buttons of a beautiful filigree pattern, strung on a cord, dangled at her throat.

As I turned, it was to find this woman's face so near that it startled me. I remember I thought it a smiling face, for all its heavy fleshiness, until on a second scrutiny I discovered, on the contrary, that it was passive.

She motioned to the mesh bag on my lap, extended her hand, then lifted her strange, meaningful eyes again to my face. Curiously affected, I put what was in it, a little small

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change, into her hard, brown hand. She shook her head incredulously, with her steady look on me.

My husband had descended and come around to my side of the carriage. At my imploring eyes, he put a larger coin into her hand.

She said no word of the usual jargon at this, but leaned in, took my hand, and, carrying it in hers, laid it against the great bulk of her body between the loins; and, still with her eyes on my face, kept it there. Strange, strange were the warmth and pulsing that seemed to pass in comforting strength into me.

"Out of me to you," she said, and relinquished my hand, but only to lean across, take up the other, and study it.

"No children!" Alas! the scornful pity in that tone!

Dropping it, she drew forth a beaded pouch from somewhere within her waist, turning a big, voluptuous shoulder as she did so, so that

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it was between the carriage and what she was about.

Then she leaned in to me again, put a strand of fine twine or thread in my fingers, and closed them upon it, the ends dangling.

"Evil, sickness—" These words among others we heard, and at each word she tied a knot in one or the other of the hanging ends. Then she closed my hand upon the whole and unsmilingly blew upon it.

"Open. They are gone."

So were the knots. In my hand lay a straight length of thread. Did I fancy her eyes were full of a gathering disdain? For me or for the artifice she used?

She searched again in the beaded pouch, this time with her eyes lifted to regard the movements of the rest of her company while she did so. Then she called abruptly in a tongue my husband thought was Spanish.

It had its instantaneous effect. The groups

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on foot climbed into the wagons, the outriders remounted, and the tiny and impudently handsome boy, smoking his achieved cigarette, came and held to her skirt.

Then having found what she was hunting for in the pouch, she leaned over and placed it in my palm. It was a bit of barked twig. I have it now, along with the piece of fine blue thread. It is indescribably bitter to the tongue, as I found when she motioned to me to taste it.

As I did so, she spoke, with a motion of her head toward the cavalcade.

“As a taste of the twig to the tongue, so is the life of these to you. The life one of these spat out of her mouth, even so bitter was that life to her.” And lifting her gaze once more to me, she walked away with the child beside her.

She mounted into a wagon, the last to ascend, and the train started. The huge vehicles

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turned at the clubhouse corner one by one into the road that led past my own gate.

We resumed our drive. But I was excited and talkative, and very shortly they took me home. It was evening before my husband would talk with me at all; but it had been an adventure, and talk of it then I would. I still thought of them as gypsies, and spoke of them so.

He set me right. They were South American Indians. He had been talking with the men, and they said so.

"They expect to take boat in the city tomorrow, to reëmbark on a fruit-steamer at New Orleans," he told me. "They are on their way from the exposition at Norfolk, where they formed an outside show. A party similar came up fifteen years ago, they say, to the World's Fair. The woman who talked with you is their head. I asked from what part of South America they come, and they said west-

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ern Brazil. 'La Montaña, or Region of Woods,' the smiling girl with the gleaming teeth called it. They spoke of themselves as Peruvian Indians."

I gave a cry, and caught up my mesh bag from the table near me. In it were my trophies, the bit of bitter twig and the length of coarse thread. And the thread was of a clear blue, worn to the grain, and oddly metallic in its fiber and luster.

She had known me,—Susy! Possibly had come this way looking for me. She had talked to me, presumably had given me a fragment from the fabled head-cloth of her people for clew. Then fierce, chary, disdainful as always in her strange and alien pride, and with no further word, had passed on in swift scorn at my soul's atrophied blindness.

No one believed me, of course. They laughed at me, in fact. But the next morning I had my way. I sent my coachman on horse-

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back to reconnoiter along the pike and its several tributaries to town. Speak again to that head-woman and convince myself I would, if it might be; but it was too late.

He had no trouble in following. It was twelve miles to the city, and the way was blazed by the trail of their depredations. A gay and pilfering tribe of the family of Autolycus, they had swept onward, filching from hen-roost and haystack, clothes-line and orchard, too rapidly to make pursuit for their petty thievings worth while. Or perhaps so wholesale a stretch of night marauding was planned to precede their immediate embarkation and departure.

For they were gone, wagon-trains, plunder, and all, on a boat leaving for New Orleans that next morning by early day.

Wonderful, strange, and occult Susy, a personage, a leader, a Miriam, a Susanna, lost to two races; and in the stead, an abetting head

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to a thieving, pilfering, half-barbarous, petty people!

I had my chance at sisterhood, I and my race, at communion with a big soul seeking egress from its darkness into whatsoever light it might find its way to; and I failed to know it, and I lost it.

And those strange, hard eyes of this Susy, there by the roadside, told me so—told me so, and then in dumb symbol their owner gave me in big and scornful measure from what she had and I had not, and passed on.

Well, it all happened so, and there is no help for it. Yet in some place to-day, God will know where, there may be similar driven souls in darkness seeking egress to the light where light offers. For this reason I have set down this case of Susy.

AN INSKIP NIGGAH

“**P**ROUD as an Inskip!” And here the epitomist stopped if he or she belonged to the white race; the acme of pride as conceived in this particular section of the south had been reached.

The black race in the region considered that it went further when in the way of illustration it said, “Proud as an Inskip niggah!”

Well! Every one, south, north, east and west, knows what the conditions were in the south after '65. In Carolina a man or woman who upon demand could produce more than fo'-pence,—they cling to their vernacular there,—was reckoned a carpet-bagger. And not to be of the nouveaux pauvres argued you of the nouveaux riches. Paugh! Bustards these last,

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gathered from afar, and battened on the corpse of the old régime! Creatures beyond the pale!

In the rice-plantation country of South Carolina, a region along the coast where arable fields, water, and semi-tropical forest intermingle, lending peculiar and haunting character to the scene, the Inskip mansion sat well back from the broad, white, sandy road, in a grove of water-oaks. It was a mellow old dwelling, faced with buff stucco and finished with white trimmings, with wings, a pillared porch, round-topped dormer windows, and a railed belvedere upon its roof.

When the last of the Inskips passed from its shelter for the last time,—she was then a woman in her forties,—to descend by gradual stages; two rooms at first as a paying guest in the home of a town acquaintance; an alcove-room next in a boarding-house; a single room finally over 'Gene Delareaux' barber shop on a side street;—ah, that there are so many and

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diverse roads to Calvary!—one would have expected the significance of the saying, "Proud as an Inskip," to wane with the family fortunes.

Also one would suppose the zest of the saying with the colored folk, "Proud as an Inskip niggah," would lessen with the fallen greatness of one Scipio Joubert, an Inskip negro of former renown, and now the queerest-looking, raggedest, old darkey imaginable.

But the sayings held good with both races for two decades to come at least, the first being whispered beneath the breath on each successive Sunday, as Miss Lavinia Inskip, the last of that affluent, ease-loving, preposterous, confident blood, came up the aisle to the family pew of the old church.

An edifice this was, known as King's Grant Chapel, erected by the Inskips in 1769 for their own use and shared by them thereafter with their neighbors in the large-mannered way

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which was characteristic with them, a structure built by Inskip slaves, and standing upon Inskip ground, a part of grants which had ceded seven thousand acres to the great-great-grandfather of Lavinia.

Though she at this time referred to,—she was living over 'Gene Delareaux' shop by now,—was long passed into that indefinite period, middle-age, her carriage had lost little of that high disdain with which she from the start had met outrageous fortune, nor had her step surrendered any great measure of its spring; she traveling the road from affluence downward with the same spirited indifference to the aspect of herself as seen by the world that was significant of her character as a girl. This had been a character given to the confident exercising of its own desires, its veriest caprices, and correspondingly indifferent to censure, though Lavinia in those days undoubtedly was bulwarked by the knowledge that the accidents

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and securities of her birth and fortune would shield her from too great stricture.

To the minds of Scipio Joubert's race, the ragged old darkey something outrivalled Lucifer in the extent of his fall. Previous to '65, he had been the Jehu supreme of the Inskips, the Jovian authority over a stable-staff of lesser lights, the stately figure upon the box who in a livery of plum and white, drove the carriage to King's Grant Chapel on Sundays, and about the country on week-days, the Inskip ladies within, they being punctilious in the somewhat elaborate performance of their obligations, religious and social. And a sight to gratify the countryside this equipage had been, having need of the pair of great bays that drew it, and bearing the Inskip family arms upon the panels of its doors.

Erstwhile imposing and now piteous old Scipio Joubert! Subsequent to that overturning of proud destinies, whites and blacks alike

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catapulting from the heaven of their high estate, he had served the town of Palmetto in several capacities. Twice a day he drove an old hack to the station to meet the two daily passenger trains, officiating with the same vehicle at weddings and funerals. He also dug the graves that were required for the infrequent dead, and cut the weeds and sedge-grass that encroached upon the graveyard which surrounded King's Grant Chapel, and which like the church itself had been shared by the Inskips with their neighbors. The recognized caretaker of the little cemetery these days, he was paid by this person and by that, whose loved ones slept in the enclosure.

He dug his occasional grave, did Scipio, and scythed and raked the little acreage within the weather-stained brick walls, pausing on his side of the fence as often as any creature of his own race showed any disposition to stop on the other side, and eyeing these with an aspect so discour-

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aging that the dusky loiterer generally altered his mind and moved along.

Scipio's boast was at those infrequent times when he did express himself, that he and his pappy and his grandpappy before them had been Inskip niggahs; adding to this the statement, the same to be construed as the hearer desired, that there were *niggahs and niggahs*, but he for his part belonged to the 'stocracy of the colored race.

There were those, white and black, who as time went on, came to shake their heads at mention of Scipio Joubert, claiming in his behalf and in the local vernacular, that the old man was *dying at the top first*.

Scipio may have been confused, and indeed was, by the ideas and values of the day in vogue around him. But to one idea he had been rooted too long to get away from it, and this was an honest pride in honest work, the satisfaction of the laborer in the honorable perform-

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ance of his task. He spoke his mind to his less conscientious fellow-workers with too much frankness to add to his popularity, remarking with exceeding bitterness of now this husky colored youth, and now that,

“He’s too s’triflin’ to lib!”

He refused at all times to dwell upon, or to enlarge on the glories of the past, the by-gone day of the Inskips, but certain of these alleged trifling younger members of his race, once they discovered this infuriated Scipio, did it for him.

Although the actual facts of the lavishness and the ostentation of the Inskip past were sufficiently prefervid as to suggest exaggeration, the old man’s tormentors went these better, these youths as a rule being the offspring of parents who in their day belonged to some neighboring plantation, and the rivalry then engendered being handed down.

These youths, gathering twice a day at the station to greet the arriving train, would con-

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gregate within earshot of poor, old Scipio, sitting on the box of his hack near the curb, their gibes taking the form of over-statements.

"Yis, niggah; yis; des like I say; er t'ousan' pair er y' oxen een thet one Inskip pastur'; des like I say!"

"Acres uv house!"

"Miles uv po'ches!"

"Mill'yums uv col'ud folks!"

"Dem many dese yere glass-house foh flowers yo' could walk all de day en not come to nary een'."

The dusky chorus would hope in vain for a sign from Scipio on his box however, unless their hilarity took another turn and touched upon Miss Lavinia Inskip in person. The first time they did so Scipio had descended from his hack and fallen upon the spokesman to such an end and such demolishment of the black boy's features, that the old man for the

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first time in his life spent his night in the calaboose.

He was younger then; nowadays the graceless hoodlums would be off and away, their guffaws coming back to him before he could clamber down; to reassemble the next time and gibe him in like fashion.

"Him white missy, she libben een er boa'din'-house!"

"Him white missy, she libben over 'Gene Del'reaux' shop!"

"Whar yo' reckon him white missy gwine to nex'? Reckon is she gwine end she days een de white-folks po'-house?"

The first time this last query reached Scipio he veered around and hoarse with fury, hurled a reply down upon the boy who made it.

"I see my missy een she castle firs'!"

And in that Scipio by this use of the word *castle*, meant coffin, or casket, this meaning being given to the word by his race in his part of

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the world to this day, the retort made by him spread in time about the town, the more that he more than once re-voiced it, aroused by the taunt which first provoked it when all others failed.

"I see my missy een she castle firs'!"

With the white population of Palmetto on the contrary, the past of the Inskips in general, and of Lavinia in particular, were matters for delicious reminiscence, topics to be brought forth and aired and enlarged upon, if only for the dazzling of the young people; a generation these, poor children, which knew not Joseph!

Stories these were, talked of by the women on porches on summer nights, and dwelt upon by them on holidays and great occasions when the contrast in the scale of life now as compared with then, was forced on the consciousness.

Was some modest gathering in the town under headway, some party for the young people,

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“Ah, the Inskips in their time never gave parties; they gave balls! Then was the day of real munificence in the entertaining, with table-pieces of spun-sugar and what not, mounting well-nigh to the dazzling chandelier!”

Happenings and incidents concerning Lavinia were the favorite recitals with these women, however, told by those who had known her, and others who had not, and dwelt upon in either event with that relish given to matters which make tradition.

Of her insouciance since the descent to her present poverty? These women so full of their stories exult in telling you of this. Pausing first to tell you that Lavinia was gifted by heaven from the start with a person elegant and pleasing. Reminding you that her education was adapted to set off these graces of her mind and person rather than to fit her with resources with which to meet her present reverses.

She dressed elegantly, so they assured you;

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she sang fairly well, accompanying herself with about the same degree of merit upon the harp; sharing a place at a card-table, however, with indeed greater ardor, playing rapidly, brilliantly and in general winning. She danced with spirit; was a moderate horse-woman; pursued pleasure with insistency, and when overtaken by boredom and ennui, frankly showed it.

Wealth, jewels, costly dressing, equipages, service, travel, adulation, admirers, oh, Lavinia from the hour of her birth reckoned her life in terms such as these!

Whereupon these women having digressed to their own delighting, proceed to the story. Telling you of how one Jonas P. Richly,—congressman from the district and the local Midas of reconstruction days, come to the region after '65 from God and the north knew where,—offering his name and hand in marriage to the penniless Lavinia, made mention

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of his wealth which so he hinted, should rehabilitate her.

Bickering always as they talked, and disputing among themselves over the details, these narrators are agreed that Lavinia at this time had reached the boarding-house stage in her descent. The one woman pausing here in her tale, to dwell upon the shrewdness of the parvenu wooer who in rehabilitating Lavinia in the world,—*her world*, that is to say,—would rehabilitate himself. Another woman here reminding you again that Lavinia in the days of her past never so much as dressed her raven hair, or picked up a discarded garment.

All narrators are agreed upon the finale. Telling you of how Lavinia, the while her middle-aged suitor talked, drew a purse from the pocket of her voluminous skirt and took a bank note from it. It was a paper bill displaying two figures, and the last she possessed in the world until the next quarter's payday.

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Letting her still fine and tapering finger-tips tear this banknote across, she placed these halves the one upon the other in turn tearing these into repeated smaller segments. Then stepping to the open window—the parlor of the boarding-house looked upon the sidewalk—and waiting until her caller had entirely finished, she let the breeze catch the fragments of the greenback from her loosened finger-tips and carry them away up the shady small-town street. After which she turned and smiling with much sweetness upon Richly who by now was red with fury, she left the room.

Of her condition of spinster, which seemingly was an inconsistent one? Ah, these women's faces would light at the chance to tell of this! Each narrator inflecting the narrative in her own way, some dwelling on Lavinia as she stood in the old Inskip garden that night amid the camellias and azaleas, the wind from the south blowing her yellow gauzes, the stars

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through the soft darkness, and also the reflections from the lighted house at hand, picking out her arms, her throat, and her sloping white shoulders. Another reminding you that unlimited wealth, the unfettered exercise of the will, extravagance, pomp, and pride, combined to make her what she then in her early twenties was.

When it came to the gist of the narrative again all were agreed, uniting in saying that Lavinia quarreled on that night with her affianced lover, two days from her wedding-date they will tell you it was, listening to the upbraidings of his unreasoning rampant jealousy, touching her lips lightly the while with a spray of small-clustered yellow-brier roses she held in her fingers, and letting him quite finish.

Whereupon she struck the lover full across the face with her rose-spray, this man who upon the threshold of his wedding-day accused her, tossed the yellow-brier away, and went back.

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into the house, the next day distributing her trousseau among the negro girls on the place, the language of each narrator here blossoming into superlatives as she dwelt upon this trousseau's extravagance.

And so the talk of these women went concerning Lavinia Inskip, the flowerings of their memories tending to prove to you that she and pride and high disdain and insolence were one, whose all now was within the four walls of a room above 'Gene Delareaux' barber shop.

They miss none of the thrill of bringing you as well as Lavinia to this climax of arrival, dwelling upon it and reveling in it, assuring you that Point d'Alencon on cotton, a Grecian urn in 'Gene Delareaux' fly-specked shop-window amid his hair-dyes and pomades, or pearls upon his big and heavy-footed wife, were not more incongruous than Lavinia in this mean and squalid room.

As concerning her since this remove no one

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had a great deal to say; Miss Inskip not only was well on in her fifties, an elderly woman now, but her path had led her farther and farther from her world and from these her former friends.

Once a week, however, as has been set forth, and this on Sundays, her old friends and the town of Palmetto still were fairly certain to see her. The spectacle of her departure from the curb before 'Gene Delareaux' shop was unique, and equally so was her arrival at King's Grant Chapel, the church of her forefathers, which had stood originally in the heart of the pine-woods but now was within the corporate limits of the town.

It has been stated that old Scipio Joubert drove a hack. Where he got the vehicle, God knows, and equally does the knowledge rest with God where Scipio obtained his horses. According to his own account, this ancient pair of grays were foaled in their time at

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King's Grant, but how they came into his possession these years after he never specified to any one.

The point is that he did have them, hack and horses, and that he kept them at the town's one livery stable, common report saying that for the sake of the gratification they afforded him on Sundays, he was content if their earnings during the week paid for their keep.

The raggedest figure in town from Monday morning to Saturday night, Scipio on Sundays was resplendent. He wore then a coachman's double-breasted coat, a shabby but whole garment with silver buttons. His hat was a coachman's beaver, old but complete to the cockade upon the side. Arriving at the curb in front of 'Gene Delareaux' at 10.45 each Sunday, he sat straight and impeccable upon the box, his whip up-right in his gray-black hand, his face impassive, waiting for Miss Lavinia Inskip to come down.

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Lavinia, who as has just been said, was considerably past fifty now, retained her humor, having been rated a wit in her day. Arrived before the gate of King's Grant Chapel ten minutes after, as she stepped to the carriage-block she would address herself with something of her old spirit to any one whom she knew who was near.

"Not come to church in your carriage! As soon not own your tomb as not command your carriage!"

King's Grant Chapel! Ah, did we to-day but build our rural churches for permanency and for beauty as did our forefathers a century and more ago. The church erected by dead and gone Inskips was built of brick brought from the mother-country and the South to-day has few to show more lovely. Vines covered its mellow red walls without, and within it was furnished with square white pews intended originally for the families of the planters, with

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a gallery above-stairs for these planters' negroes.

Before Miss Inskip entered the church her gaze invariably traveled to the lovely and silent graveyard surrounding the building, so serene within its enclosing red-brick walls. The old burying-ground was a peaceful and comforting spot, with its well-kept paths, its mossy monuments of the past, its great live-oak trees and occasional glossy-leaved magnolia.

The dead and gone Inskips did things well. There was a lych-gate flanking the customary gateway in front of the church,—where the bearers of the dead, and in the past these bearers were always loved slaves, might set down the coffin while they gathered breath for the further journey.

Also there was a mortuary in the center of the burying-ground, a square-set, low building of red brick with a portico with white columns,

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a temporary abiding-place for the unburied dead and yet, more than this too.

The families who originally brought their dead to this cemetery lived on the surrounding plantations. In this country of the rice-planter one travels by both horse and boat, highway and water. More often than not the bayou and the creek with their endless windings, or the sluggish river and the canal were the thoroughfares by which the mourners, the bearers, and the dead must come, and also the neighbors of the dead, rowed by negro crews in livery.

These journeyings up or down the waterways, as the case may be, often are dependent on the tide. Ask those who know and they will tell you that nothing travels quickly in a tidewater region, a boat often having a day's journey to go, turning and doubling to reach what is but an hour's distance as the crow flies.

Often the funeral-boat with the family and

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the dead, waiters upon the tide, must come by night, the moon making a fleecy whiteness of the low-floating mists, beautiful and mysterious.

And after the dead were laid away, the returning family frequently must wait again, one hour, two, three and four, for the tide to take them home. In the old days everything within a radius of forty miles was considered as neighborhood and the white families within this area were regarded as the community.

The squat square brick-mortuary was so planned therefore to afford as suitable a shelter for the families as a temporary resting-place for the dead. Facing the portico and the entrance doorway, at the rear of a small rotunda, was the chapel for the last named; while for the living there were two pleasantly ample rooms with windows, one on each side of the rotunda, furnished alike with ponderous sofas and chairs, and a massive center-table, each with a

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fireplace set with andirons, huge and black, and a mantel-shelf with iron candelabra which matched the fire-dogs.

Each successive Sunday that through the long years brought Lavinia to King's Grant Chapel, saw her pause on the gravel in front of the church, and before she passed on into the building and to her white pew, gaze about the peaceful burying-ground, drinking in, as it were, its sweet silence and its serenity. And again she would make a remark to any of her old friends who were standing near, spirited, biting, frank and blunt, and yet good humored too,

"He owns his residence in perpetuity who owns his own tomb!"

Nor were those wanting who took amiss this speech, assuming it to be a reminder that their dead after all were on sufferance here, tenants on Inskip soil. Though Lavinia looked an old woman now, being thinner and her fine shoul-

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ders a trifle bent, these offended ones held that her always keen tongue was sharper.

It is entirely doubtful if after she went to live over 'Gene Delareaux' shop, a single of these former friends and acquaintances sought her out there, and it is less probable that she would have received them had they done so. And this would be for their sakes, so Lavinia would have explained, saying that she had accommodated herself to her condition whereas her friends would have suffered embarrassment. Rumor had it on those occasions when her now more rarely mentioned name came up that she no longer had even the partial services of a maid, as she did for a time after she left the boarding-house. Hearsay having it that she prepared her own meals, a five-cent soup-bone bubbling in a stew-pan on a hob hooked upon the bars of her open grate, while she drew her tea in an earthen pot,—a kettle sharing the hob with the stew-pan,—pouring the bubbling

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water with nicety onto the pinch of copper-green leaves, her part of the south being reared to revere Young Hyson and Gunpowder. But of these rumored things no one was entirely sure because no one really had penetrated into this her last retirement.

She came less regularly to church, too, of late; old Scipio had developed what he and his race in his region call *tissic*, and the rest of the world calls asthma. And about this time one of his ancient horses died and he did away with his hack, appearing in a new capacity with his one horse, driving a dray.

This was the winter that 'Gene Delareaux, the barber, died—the winter that Lavinia herself was fifty-nine.

She had been ill of the prevailing influenza herself, and obliged to have in a young colored girl to nurse her and look after her, by name Halcyon Kice, a granddaughter of a former Inskip house-servant.

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When a person's quarterly income is less than the sum paid by this person for many a hat in the past, the least infringement across the dividing-line and the deed is done and one is in debt.

Lavinia was two months behind with her rent when 'Gene Delareaux died. It was a matter of dollars fewer than Lavinia had fingers, but as viewed by 'Gene Delareaux' widow it was a sum she declined longer to do without.

'Gene himself had drifted to this up-coast region three decades ago from the metropolis of Charleston and rejoiced in a temperament. He had enjoyed his lodger and she enjoyed 'Gene. Theirs was an exchange of mutually appreciative wit. He was a landlord, yes, but a landlord with the simplicity of a truly amiable and discerning soul and with a rare delight in drama.

'Gene saw in Miss Lavinia all the lavishness and the romance, and also the ensuing tragedy

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of the south. The sheet of cheap note-paper which she handed to him monthly with its in-folded greenbacks touched him deeply, and he had it reckoned with shrewd appraisement very nearly to the two-bits how meager the sum was that remained to her after this rent was paid.

But 'Gene's wife, now his widow, big and heavy-footed creature, saw the matter from another viewpoint. Under stress of the lodger's increasing poverty and also her equally fast approaching age, what time could there be better than now to get rid of her? Seeing that she indeed might be left some day upon her landlady's hands! The truth was too that the big widow's little husband had somewhat too warmly admired his lodger and this was enough for the wife.

The widow imparted her fears to her only son and to this son's wife. An interview then ensued with the lodger, the young colored girl Halcyon being sent out of the room by Miss

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Inskip while it took place, to hover instead outside the door upon the landing of the stairs where she lost no word that was said.

Miss Lavinia's room was on the second floor and her windows were open. So were the windows of the wife of the green-grocer whose shop adjoined, and the voice of 'Gene Delareaux' widow was strident and carried.

It seemed that Mrs. 'Gene Delareaux would be infinitely pleased to receive her over-due rent.

The voice of the lodger, calm and unmoved, evidently carried too. "Ah, my friend, but if I must ask you to wait?"

"Wait? And why should I be expected to wait?"

"Because it is impossible for the present for me to pay you."

"Why, then, should you expect to stay?"

"*Stay?* Ah! You look at the matter in this way?"

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There was a pause. Miss Inskip in truth was standing silent looking at her landlady with a little frown of concentration upon her brows. The moment had arrived then, the climax she long had feared, sprung out of debt, and always dreaded as a possibility.

"I will go; certainly, my friend; but—you will see my embarrassment in the face of the nature of my predicament—I will go, but until my yet due money arrives, I am asking myself—go where?"

It requires bluster and considerable self-urging and self-boosting to be really nasty. In the effort the would-be offender not infrequently blurts out a thing more brutal than is intended. It was so with 'Gene's excited widow.

"There's always the poor-house for those who can't look further!"

The grocer's wife next door left her window and flew down her steps to the street, hurrying

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to tell what she had overheard to her woman-crony at the corner fish-stall. She of the stall told it to her husband, and the negro-boy who drove their spring wagon and made their deliveries, overheard the story and repeated it at the livery stable when he took his horse there at noon for its mid-day feeding.

Old Scipio Joubert was at the livery stable, he indeed for twenty years having occupied a shed-room in the rear of the building, and heard the story to its climax as it rolled unctuously off the colored boy's tongue.

"En she say, Missus Delareaux say to Miss 'Vinla Inskip, 'Dere's de po'-house foh dem whut cyant look fur'er.'"

"I see my Missy een she castle firs'!" It was Scipio Joubert shouting, wild with rage, his hoarse old voice breaking on the last words in well-nigh a scream.

As he spoke the figure of Halcyon Kice, the colored girl, appeared in the livery stable door

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outlined against the noonday brightness. She was seeking Scipio.

"Miss 'Vinia sent me to fotch yo' to her at once."

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If Lavinia Inskip had not disappeared she no doubt would have remained in oblivion for the rest of her days. It required that she vanish out of their midst for her old acquaintances and such of their children and grandchildren as recalled her, to remind themselves that she still had a claim upon them, however attenuated.

She disappeared on Monday, leaving in the absence of the Delareaux', who were gone, mother, son and daughter-in-law, to negotiate for a tombstone that should set forth the good qualities of 'Gene. She left a penciled note behind her, inclosing a brooch, which she stated would cancel her indebtedness to 'Gene's wife.

By Tuesday the news had spread as these things do in a town, coming in through the

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kitchen, brought by tradespeople and servants. By Wednesday each person in town was telling it to some other, and by Thursday the story had assumed its final shape:—

Lavinia Inskip had been threatened with the poor-house, and she and Scipio had disappeared together.

“Een him dray,” this bit of testimony being insisted on by every colored narrator.

It was known that Lavinia had sent to the livery-stable for Scipio and that the fanatic old darkey ere he left to seek her, had reiterated:

“I see my Missy een she castle firs’!”

There was a demand for Scipio now, a growing muttering among the male white population of the town, he of the grocery, he of the fish-stall, and the sons and the grandsons of Lavinia’s old friends. She was become a personage again, the subject and the center of town and family talk. The importance of the individual rose or fell according as he or she

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had known Lavinia. By late afternoon on Thursday the mutterings began to increase, threatening to become formidable.

Alas, that it is always so! That it is ever the case that the black skin should breed distrust in the white mind, and the black heart be deemed unworthy by the white heart.

There was a group gathered before the shabby post-office door discussing the matter. A group similarly engaged stood on the sidewalk in front of the town's one hotel. The young rector of King's Grant Chapel was pausing near the drug store at the corner talking with Judge Kenton, a contemporary of Lavinia, and with Dr. Bob,—surnamed Estill, though no one ever used the surname,—the town's leading physician for years upon years.

And the murmurings of these groups mounting ominously to mutterings, were not of Lavinia but Scipio. Ugly murmurings they were and hideous in their implyings, could the dar-

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key be found. When rounding the corner beyond the hotel and coming across the street toward the group standing before the drug store appeared Scipio himself.

The queerest-looking, raggedest old darkey, with a sheaf of cheap white envelopes in his gray-skinned, horny hand.

"Sarbant, Jedge," said Scipio, stepping up on the sidewalk and approaching this person, "I gwine er giv' yo' righ' hyere en now de wurd I wuz to tek to yo' doah."

The hand of the judge, he was a tall and angular person, and his scant hair was iron-gray, thrust aside the envelope proffered to him and fell sternly upon the shoulder of Scipio.

"Where is your mistress? Tell us that first."

"I see my Missy at she own reques' safe een she castle."

The old man was proffering a second envelope to Dr. Bob.

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"Foh se'f, sah, en yo' lady, Missus Estill."

Fifteen minutes later the contents of these two notes and a dozen others like them had spread about the town and were being discussed by every white lip and white tongue,

"Miss Lavinia Inskip will receive her old friends on Friday afternoon, at her King's Grant Chapel Castle."

And why not? She might have had a roof-tree beneath which fittingly to receive them all these years. Bizarre! Preposterous! Unheard of! This last, yes, she granted her old world this! As for the first preferred charges, Lavinia would have none of them, claiming that her act was full of common sense and therefore characteristic.

When her dozen old friends arrived Friday afternoon, picking their several ways between the graves of Lavinia's kindred,—parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandsires and great-grandsires and their ladies,—the door opening

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on the pillared portico of the red-brick mortuary was stretched wide to the sweetness and the sunshine of the crystal-clear spring day. The windows within the square-set building were open too to the afternoon. On the hearth of the fireplace in each great room opening right and left off the central rotunda, a fire of fat pine-knots blazed cheerfully. Lavinia's handful of old furniture brought with her on Scipio's dray the day that she and the old man arrived, broke the austerity of the rooms.

She must have gone into her several trunks; an India shawl lay across the arm of a chair in the more formally disposed room and a pair of opera-glasses lay upon the table.

Lavinia touched these glasses with her thin but still finely molded hand. "To help me to become acquainted once more with my former intimates, the birds," she explained.

Her hands leaving the opera-glasses gestured faintly, "Ah, my friends, to be enabled to

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receive you so satisfactorily once more. To have you see me reinstated, restored to the world, and to you! The tool-house serves admirably for my body-servant and protector, Scipio. His horse and dray were returned by him to-day to their keeping at the livery stable! He and I have long contemplated this remove. What a deplorable thing it is when for want of a little courage one forbears taking a step that taken turns out so well!"

Her sprightliness was infectious and her humor held her guests as it had done of old.

"Comfort! Security! Relaxation of mind! Believe me, dear friends, he owns his residence in perpetuity who owns his tomb!"

When her guests departed at sunset, still stunned and dazed, they left her standing on the portico, looking after them, as they picked their returning ways between the graves and across the live-oaks' shadows.

"Racine!" she called after the judge.

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He turned, an angular and tall figure. He had loved her madly for a hopeless while in his youth and the sweet melancholy of the recollection made the present poignant with him.

"Racine, no doubt your judicial mind has pointed out full often that a man's house is his castle. It is a poor rule that does not work both ways, and I would point out to you that a man's castle also may be his house!"

Old Scipio Joubert came round the side of the red-brick building. His arms were piled high with freshly cut billets of fat pine. The Judge and Dr. Bob both called to mind a wind-felled pine-tree beyond the tool-house, long moldering amid the graves and an eyesore.

They also saw Miss Lavinia step forward to meet Scipio as he came up the low steps to the portico and lay a hand on his sleeve. Her remark sent forth on the golden air of the evening was meant for them. It bit with its sprightly good-humor.

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“If God had not willed many things, it could not have come about that out of so much friendship there emerged for me the miracle of a friend.”

POM

THE newly dug grave was finished, and the rope and planks for the business at hand were placed decently on the mound of fresh earth beside it. The older colored men put on their coats and started for the gate of the little cemetery, leaving the two youths, Pomeroy and Carrson, both lately come of age, to gather up spades and crowbar, and follow.

It was Pom's dead who would go in that grave. He drew on his coat slowly, outwardly a stolid figure, inwardly afraid, horribly afraid of this open parallelogram cut deep into the earth and the thing to which it and the neighboring mounds dotting the hillside bore witness. However expressionless his face, he was grateful not to be left here alone to perform these last services.

Carrson, the second youth, stooped, picked up a clod of earth, threw it on the mound beside the grave, desisted and, looking at Pomeroy, spoke. He was slighter in build than his companion, and a mulatto, Pom being the warm brown of the purer negro.

"If they want me to work on the road to-morrow, they got to come after me. I ain't goin' to repo't if I don't have to."

Pomeroy, with his gaze on his friend, thought this over, the slow knitting of his brow being the outward show of this laborious act. As the two shouldered their implements and started for the gate, he answered:

"I reckon I'll go on in to the co'te-house, an' repo't to the road-boss, like they tol' me."

The mulatto boy jeered, "Like who tol' you? How many white men is you goin' to fin' there? The white man gets excused f'om puttin' in his day's work on the county roads. It's des the same way thet he holds the land, an' the crops,

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an' you an' me an' the res' of the colored folks does the plowin' an' the plantin'."

Pom thought this over also, his gaze lifting from the hillside dotted with graves at his feet, and traveling from landmark to landmark about the rolling country spread before him, beneath the June sky. It was a limestone region, cut by a rock-bottomed creek meandering between wooded banks, and checkered with the brown of fields newly planted in corn, the amber of maturing wheat, and the green of bluegrass pastures. The soil, the seasons, the labor engendered by these, the rewards of this labor, here were matters grasped by Pom! As his gaze came back to Carr, his face was illuminated by a smile of intelligence and great sweetness, his white teeth gleaming as his lips parted. "I got my eye on a li'l piece of ground nex' to my Uncle Nathan's, that I mean to buy for myself some day."

Carr, ignoring this interpolation, held to his

Pom

point: "What's the matter with you, fool-boy, goin' in at the first call? Ain't you know yet that you've got to show the white people that you're free? Where's yo' education that yo' Uncle Nathan an' yo' Aunt Adele give you, at the school along with the res' of us? Us black people have been free forty year now. Who goin' to tell you that you got to work on the road?"

"The res' of the boys is goin' in to-morrow, like the summons said."

"I ain't, an' Chester ain't, an' Henry ain't, not tell we know we have to. Better think about what I'm tellin' you, fool-boy."

The radiance that had lighted the face of Pomeroy a moment since faded under the scorn of his friend's words. For the most part Pom admired the yellow boy, but at times, of late, he would find his fists doubling under the taunts of Carr.

The two separated at the cemetery gate at

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the foot of the hill, Carr to go east along the road up the creek, Pom going west until he came to the covered bridge, which he crossed, to continue his way north by the pike.

He was returning to the home of his uncle and his aunt with whom he lived, and where the aunt lay dead. The funeral was at noon in the frame church in the locust grove, and the negro population for miles around would be there.

Pom walked ploddingly, deep in thought. He shifted the two spades from the one to the other shoulder. Free? He had heard the word all his life. His aunt Adele, dead of a wasting, baffling sickness, and waiting in the decent little home in her coffin with its silver handles and its name-plate, was eighteen years old when freedom came. Uncle Nathan, her husband, the two being the foster-parents of Pomeroy, had been older. The boy could remember no other parents, his earliest recollec-

tion of himself being as a toddler beneath his aunt's feet.

The thought of this aunt brought him back to the terror gripping him, to his fear of the thing which the grave just dug on the hillside stood for, and now brought home to him for the first time in his life. His face twitched, and a tear rolled down his cheek.

The little frame house beside the pike, amid the dwellings of its colored neighbors, came into sight. Vehicles and horses were lined along the fence. Within the yard, where the kinspeople and friends of the dead woman were assembling, gay perennials bloomed in the borders, and to the side of the cottage was a garden, its peas staked and its beans in bloom. At sight of these familiar things the face of the boy twitched again.

Gaining the yard, and acknowledging the groups assembled within it with a nod, he entered the house, coming directly into the room

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where his aunt lay in her coffin, her copper-hued face, benignant in life, majestic now in death. A shudder shook him. He passed through to the room beyond. His suit of Sunday clothes, in company with his second-best coat and trousers, hung here behind a calico curtain. Making his decent toilet, a white shirt, collar and tie, and his Sunday trousers, he reached for the coat, to find the accustomed peg empty. Thrusting the curtain aside, he found it, with his second-best coat beside it, at the far end of the row of pegs.

A small matter, though who could have moved them? The dead Adele was the only woman in the house, and was nursed to the end by her husband and her nephew. And a jealous housewife she, nor one to brook interference, stealing from her bed almost to the end, for a reassuring touch about her house, and an oversight of the apparel of the two men who soon would have no woman to care for them.

“ ‘Where moth an’ rus’ corrup’,’ I reckon that’s my fav’rit’ tex’, ” was a saying with her.

The boy’s dressing being finished, he, returned to the front room, this time to take his place by the coffin beside his Uncle Nathan, whose mild, thin, quadron face, habitually pensive, now was set with melancholy.

Beyond Uncle Nathan sat Uncle Taliaferro Bucklin, uncle of the dead woman, a gaunt but powerful octogenarian, white-headed, his hands folded on his cane.

Behind these two, and standing, towered Uncle Mark Tolman, the brother of Adele, black and massive, his head covered with a tight-curved fleece that swept downward to garb cheek and chin, his countenance deliberate and full of gentleness. From the near-by kitchen came the voices of the women-kins-people.

Uncle Taliaferro Bucklin, as though resuming a conversation interrupted by the entrance

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of Pomeroy, addressed himself to Uncle Nathan, his words being guarded and low.

"You foun' the dress an' apron un'er the house this mawnin'?"

Nathan agreed. "Pom en me come on it there, when we wuz gettin' out thet loose plank-in' thet wuz piled there, fo' to be used at the grave."

A cold hand seemed to clutch and close upon the already terrified heart of Pom. It was he, and not his Uncle Nathan, who had drawn from under the house a dress and apron belonging to Adele, and which had disappeared from the line of freshly washed clothes some months before. Both garments were moldy and weather-stained, the apron being rolled about the dress, and the dress wrapped about a limp rag-doll.

Or Pom had adjudged it to be a doll at the moment, putting the incident down to some child of the colored neighborhood, who, know-

ing itself to be in mischief, had hidden the doll and the purloined clothing under some imminent stress of discovery, and then was afraid to return for it. He recalled now that the manner of his Uncle Nathan, from the moment of their finding, had been furtive and non-committal.

Uncle Mark Tolman was speaking, his deep voice shaken. "The doctor's comin', an' the doctor's goin'. You did a husban's part, Brother Nathan, you did yo' part. Adele tricked, do yo' reckon, Adele tricked, an' nobody suspicionin' it?"

Tears rolled down his face and his hand, which had lifted as he spoke, fell to his side.

From afar up the pike came the first toll of the high-pitched little church-bell. The men stood up, the women came in, the vehicles and horses were unhitched and brought around, the procession forming outside the gate along the pike, with the newly arrived hearse at the head.

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Aunt Adele tricked! Pom took his place beside Uncle Nathan, they being the first mourners. He walked beside the older man when the moment came to move forward, behind the bearers and the coffin, out the front door into the yard, down the path to the gate and through it to the pike, where he took his place beside the husband in the first of the carriages.

Aunt Adele tricked? The little cortège moved along the road, between wayside banks sweet with honeysuckle and white with blossoming blackberry vines. Aunt Adele tricked? All that the boy ever knew concerning these dark practices of his race came crowding his mind.

There is the hoodoo, the cunjuh and the tricking. Pom shivered. The hoodoo and the cunjuh have to do with the will and actions of the victim and are worked by the hoodoo and the conjuh bag. Hadn't Pom, since his baby

days, known the old people's story of one Congo Joe, compelled under the hoodoo laid upon him, to rise up out of his bed and with an ax kill the wife and children sleeping beside him?

Did he not know the case of Camille Tarascon, the young girl, whose story still was whispered among her friends of Aunt Adele's generation, who was forced under the conjuh put upon her to wander witless about the countryside crooning foolish songs, until the mill-pond mercifully closed over her?

Through the open window of the carriage, the summer day was flawless, the crystalline air cut by wing and filled with song. Pom gazing out upon these reassuring things saw the hearse rounding a bend in the green-bordered pike ahead.

He shuddered anew. A tricking, such as Uncle Mark Tolman intimated might have been put upon Aunt Adele, now in her coffin

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within that hearse, has to do with the body, entering into the blood and working out through the tormented flesh. Two factors go into a tricking, as every child in Pom's young days knew, the one being called *the showing*, and indicating the part of the body to be tormented. Had not the limp rag doll repeated itself in the wasting body of his aunt? Who could deny this? It was plainly evident.

The second factor in a tricking is *the cantrap*. Any child in Pom's time, old enough to catch the whispers about him, also knew the nature of a cantrap. While a cunjuh bag and a hoodoo bag, whatever else their contents, must include a bit of the hair of the victim, the favored contents of a cantrap as known to Pom is a frog heart strung upon a horse hair, varied in some cases with a lizard skin pierced with a rusty nail, the whole then being folded in many wrappings, and wound about with yarn-string criss-crossed. And woe to that person who,

Pom

in his ignorance, opens and gazes upon the contents of a cantrap!

The procession was turning in at the clearing beneath the locust-trees at the side of the pike, the gnarled older trees and the younger saplings, alike white with pendulous blooms flinging their honeyed fragrance on the day.

Aunt Adele, who now was being lifted in her coffin from the hearse before the church door, tricked? Pshaw! And the boy following the husband from the carriage straightened sturdily. He was remembering that he was an educated negro; not Uncle Nathan or Uncle Mark, without book learning; nor yet Uncle Taliaferro Bucklin, able only, and with infinite endeavor, to put a cross beside his name.

And Pom, restored and reinstated, moved up the church-steps. He was *a young negro*, he was! A new-type product, able to cipher and to write, and also, when called upon in the eve-

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nings, to read aloud from the *History of the United States*, the two volumes bought by Uncle Nathan from a passing agent.

Within the church, the generation to which Pom belonged was to the fore, Katie Wilson being at the organ, and Carr, Chester and Henry, with Idelle Smith and Mary Prince, constituting the choir. The building, with its decent pews, chancel and desk, and its railed-off choir, was open to the day, doors and windows being stretched wide.

The generations of the women, in their places in the pews, were set apart, the old, old women being dressed in quaint and rusty black, with tiny capes, bonnets, and silver spectacles; the middle-aged women wearing woolen skirts and shirtwaists; the young wives, maidens and half-grown girls being arrayed as nearly in the fashion of the hour as they could achieve.

The congregation, old, middle-aged and young, to the smallest among them, had risen

and were standing, as Adele in her coffin, went by them up the aisle, borne now, as she was borne a while ago from her own home, by men of her generation, bearded husbands and fathers, grave with dignity; and followed by the husband, the foster-son and the relatives.

“ ‘I am the resurrection and the life—’ ”

The minister, a portly and personable man, met Adele in her coffin at the chancel steps.

A hymn, a prayer, and a reading from the Scriptures followed, with a sermon next, on faith and duty done. Attention, respect and quiet prevailed. A final prayer ensued, punctuated with here and there a sob arising from the body of the church, a cry of amen, or a wail from a mourner.

The choir arose again. “Asleep in Jesus,” it sang.

It was melody, sweet, low, swaying and mounting; and by the time the second verse began a hum arose beneath the articulated words,

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coming again from the body of the church; a breathing it was at first, and then a croon that grew and swelled to a rich volume which supported the spoken words rising through it and above it.

Then uplifted some old, old voice wailing according to the fashion of a former day, followed by here a hand-clap, there a groan, now a cry, then a deep-volumed amen. Voices, bass as often as treble, broke into words sharp-called and staccato.

"Farewell, Adele."

"Farewell, Sister."

"Zion and Jubilation for you now, Sister."

"Lord, take *us*."

"Call us next, Jesus."

"Sleep, Sister, sleep well to-night, Adele."

There were wailings throughout the older portions of the congregation, and deep groanings, Nathan, the husband crying out in his misery, the sister-in-law beating the air with

her hands, springing up and shrieking aloud, to fall back exhausted; the young people in the church sitting mute and immovable the while, the choir alone continuing to sing, and its closing amen being uttered coldly.

The sister-in-law shrieked, and shrieked again.

"The further services will be conducted at the grave," said the minister.

Pom stood up. His necktie hung loose, his face was bathed with sweat, and he reeled a little. Had he, a young negro, he, like Carr and Chester and Henry, an educated negro, been a part of the thing he had supposed he was but a witness to? Dazed and stumbling, he moved into the aisle, his hand, whether from habit, from embarrassment, or to find his folded handkerchief, seeking his coat pocket, to have his fingers meet and close upon—

The hand withdrew itself, opening a trifle as he came out the church door into the bright

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day, that his eyes might catch sight of the contents. After which he stumbled on, appalled, confounded, well-nigh oblivious; to find himself helped by half a dozen hands to his place in the carriage; the while he clutched in his convulsively twitching fingers, a small packet encased in wrappings and wound about with string criss-crossed, a thing ominous to his understanding and pregnant with meaning.

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Nine hours later a moon in its second quarter was dropping behind the swelling uplands, revealing fields and woodlands, a lonely road, and the cottage home of one old Frog-heart Cummins, the cunjuh-doctor. It was a cabin of upright boards, a wretched hovel, with a doorstep and a door, but no window, sitting in a tiny yard overgrown with briars and sassafras clumps and clambering wild grape vine. The still whiteness of the descending moon fell on Pomeroy also, standing as one who is im-

Pom

pelled, and yet is overwhelmed, at the gate before the cottage.

After the funeral services at the grave to-day, Uncle Mark Tolman had gone home, with his wife and daughters; but Uncle Taliaferro Bucklin, who lived across the country in the adjoining county, had returned with Nathan and Pomeroy to the cottage on the pike to spend the night.

Pom had moved through the succeeding tasks of the day mechanically, performing the needful domestic routine, setting the kitchen to rights, scattering grain for the young chickens, and taking the bucket and going across the fields to the kitchen door of the white neighbor who supplied Adele and her family with skimmed milk.

Pom's Aunt Adele, who now was in her grave, tricked, done to her death! And he, her nephew the victim next fixed upon in the household! The thought ever and again re-

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peated itself, through the golden afternoon; and time and again, as he was preparing supper for the three, he shook in a paroxysm of fear.

The evil set afoot by a tricking dies with the victim. There was comfort in the knowledge of this, but Pom's hand in seeking the pocket of his Sunday coat as he left the church this morning, had closed upon the evidence of a fresh tricking. This evidence was hidden now behind a vase on the mantel in the front room, wrapped in a hymn-book leaf and tied with string wound criss-cross in the reverse to avert the evil. A Scripture leaf would have been better, but the one Bible in the house belonged to his aunt Adele, herself a tricked woman, and he was doubtful as to its efficacy.

Supper being over, the boy, after many efforts, spoke to his companions, the octogenarian, and the man of three score and five. He was facing them, standing with his back to

the press of shelves and glass doors, where he had just put away the last dish.

"How duz yo' get rid of a trickin', supposin' yo' knowed about it?"

Both men looked across the tiny kitchen at the boy, Uncle Taliaferro from his chair with the wooden arms by the window, Uncle Nathan from the bench just inside the open door, both evidently doubtful as to what prompted the question, and both disposed to ponder it. In time out of the silence Uncle Nathan spoke:

"The onliest thing thet can be done with a trickin', pervided you hev foun' the cantrap thet is workin' the evil, is to pass it along to some other pusson."

Uncle Taliaferro amended this statement: "Some y'other pusson ez ain't fortified in his mind against it, nur yet prepared. It's got ter be the unsuspicionin' person whut kin be tricked."

Uncle Nathan presently spoke again out of

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a second ruminating and deliberating silence. "You can't burn a cantrap, nur you can't drown it, nur bury it. Burn the cantrap whut has tricked yo' en you burn with it; drown it, en yo' drown; bury it, en yo' dig yo' own grave."

Uncle Taliaferro broke in authoritatively: "They used ter tell en my day about one Eli Whaley, whut thought to burn his cantrap on er rocky hilltop, whar no fire could reach him, on'y jes' thet f'om his own steel an' tinder, an' wuz smit down in the act by the fire of lightnin' f'om heaven."

Uncle Nathan nodded in reflective confirmation. "My Mammy used to tell about one par'lyzed ol' Mom 'Lize Becker, foun' face down in six inches uv wayside ditch whar she hed bin stoopin' ter drown her cantrap. You kin cross a hoodoo back on the evil-doer ef you knows who thet may be, an' likewise you can cross a cunjuh, but the onliest thing thet can

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be done with a trickin' is to pass it on to some other unsuspicionin' pusson."

"The question bein'," amended Uncle Taliaferro, "who thet pusson is gwine ter be. It ain't everybody thet is open ter a trickin'. There ain't but des one pusson lef' in dese parts ez kin tell yo' thet, en thet pusson is Frog-Heart Cummins, the cunjuh-man."

And Pom now was at the gate of this person's cottage. More dead than alive, he was here to ask the question, the six miles of his secret journey between home and the lonely cabin, being a nightmare of coming.

Shame, as well as terror, had attacked him on the way, flaming hot and scorching. Shame that he, an educated colored boy, the friend of Carr, Chester and Henry, should be as open to the panic of this thing as any unlettered older member of the race.

But these returns to reason and to common-sense weré momentary, and were followed each

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time by greater panic. Let Carr jeer, and let Chester and Henry deride him. Pom was not sure, anyway, that he was not more than sick and tired of their superiority.

Having reached this point in his deliberations as he stood hesitating at the conjuh-man's gate, he lifted the latch and hurrying up the path, knocked at the door of the house before his courage again could desert him.

Half an hour later he was leaving this door. In the light of a smoky lamp held by the uncertain hand of the weazened and tottery old colored man standing on the sill, the boy's face was ashen. In his hand along with the fateful package of the morning, still wrapped in its hymn-book leaf, was a second package similarly folded.

The old negro, the dome of whose palsied head was bald above a fringe of white wool, was speaking, peering out at the departing visitor as he did so, through square, silver-framed

spectacles. The light from the same lamp showed the interior of the room behind him, its flickering reflection revealing a sagging bed, a table cluttered with broken food and unwashed utensils, two chairs before a handful of smoldering sticks on an open hearth, and a miscellany of dirt and disorder.

“Thet glib yellow boy called Carrson, he’s de one, ez I hev bin a-tellin’ yo’.” The quavering voice was repeating this as though for the pleasure derived from the repetition. “Dis yere conjuh-man hez bin knowin’ foh some while thet his time wuz a-comin’. Thet yellow boy, he’s so bresh thet he’s dang’rous. Yo’ cyant sass de ol’, en mock at their ways, ez thet boy duz eve’y time he meets me een de road, en not hev de signs come a-roun’ aginst yo’. I been a-waitin’ foh his time, I been a-layin’ low, en hidin’ de hour, knowin’ his time wuz boun’ ter come.”

The laugh, cackling and high, was full of

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triumph. "Whut hez de Scrip'ters got ter say about de young whut mock at de ol'? I ax yo' thet boy? *'En thar wuz come forth two she-bears outter de wood, en tear fohty en two chil'un uv dem.'*"

The quavering voice dropped from its shrill pitch, and became conversational and practical.

"De salt whut I give yo' in de package, boy, yo' is ter sprinkle on thet yellor boy's doorstep ez yo' go home to-night. De res' uv de trickin' is ter be pufformed ez I done instruc' yo'. Thet glib yellor boy thinks he kin laugh at a cunjuh-man! He reckons he can be bresh wi' ol' Frog-Heart Cummins! Yo' go en do whut I tol' yo', boy, an' praise Gawd, by anudder day's dawnin' yo' is er free man!"

Pom went down the path and through the gate to the road, that by and by would emerge on the pike. The moon had set, and the night, now grown chill, was laden with the fragrance of the dew-wet weeds and the wayside blossoms.

A bird peeped, and from afar an owl called. The boy hurried along by the light of the stars.

“Free? By to-morrow’s dawning, he again would be a free man?”

He came to the pike at last; he came to the road that followed the creek on this side of the covered bridge; he came in time to Carr’s gate half a mile up this creek. His exhausted body drooped, his weary feet dragged over the clods in the path to the cottage door. In his hand was the package of salt, and the criss-crossed cantrap which he was here to conceal beneath the doorstep, according to the instructions from Frog-Heart Cummins. He also was to obtain some articles of Carr’s clothing, and this within the next few days, to wrap about a small china image given him to-night by the cunjuh-man, and so complete the tricking.

Trick Carr! The silence from the sleeping world around him pressed upon Pom. Trick

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his friend and playmate of a lifetime, his crony, and of late his adviser! He leaned, panting, against a post of the little porch before the door. He groaned aloud.

A curious necessity drove him on to consider starkly the thing he had come here to do, saying to himself at the same time, that he would be firm, that he was not afraid.

He was here at this doorstep to trick his neighbor that he might save himself. He was come here to send his friend to his grave on yonder hillside, even as his own Aunt Adele had been tricked to hers.

Pom had seen his aunt suffer. He had seen her wasting with fever, and chilled with sweats, through the days and the nights of long months. He had seen her panting, shaken by dreadful spasms as she struggled for breath, her face convulsed, and her face haggard. He had been with her in the hour of her dying, and had seen her strong-featured face, ravaged

with disease and hollow, grow immobile and then fixed, and her hands, that had labored so capably for her husband and for her foster-child, stiffen into a last rigidity which would stir no more. For Pom to *spare* Carrson was himself to accept a fate and a suffering such as Adele endured.

As he thought on these things, a hideous agitation seized him; his body swayed, his tongue was dry, jerky tremblings ran over him, he was cold; then his mind wandered, and he found himself thinking of Carr as he doubtless was at this moment, asleep within the silent house. And his heart began to beat tumultuously again, and his body to shudder, and he told himself once more, that he must be firm, that he must not be afraid.

He began to bluster. Spare Carr? Why should he spare this bresh yellow boy who, more often than not, was as contemptuous of the slower-witted Pom, as he was derisive of old

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Frog-Heart Cummins and his dark powers. Fool-boy and fool-man was what Carr considered the two of them.

Fool-boy! Pom would show Carr this night whether he and Frog-Heart Cummins were quite the fools that he adjudged them!

Rage awoke in him at this point that he should hesitate, and anger full of desperation, mixed with a terrible anxiety lest he was going to fail himself in his necessity, and he began to bluster again, this time telling himself that once he went ahead, the thing then was done, and past any power on his part to undo.

And here once more his mind wandered, and again he saw the yellow boy asleep, his keen features outlined against his pillow, defenseless in his inertness, *unfortified and unsuspecting!*

Pom's memory traveled heavily back to himself as a loutish school-boy, with Carr, the brag

sparrer of the school, teaching him how to take care of himself. He saw himself go down, and go down again and yet again, under the planted blow of the slighter boy. And again and yet again he heard this prancing, feinting, light-stepping youth urging him,

“Git up, git up an’ defen’ yo’s’e’f, boy.”

And still his heavy mind traveled, seeing the bresh yellow boy jeering Frog-Heart Cummins as the old man came along the country road, and he heard the yellow boy saying,

“Quit yo’ nonsense, Cummins, workin’ on the minds uv the ol’ an’ the li’l chil’ren!”

Pom’s hands, clutching the two packages, fell heavily. He rocked from side to side, and cried out in his travail, as the idea, struggling to be born, tore its way through the thick integument of his slow mind.

“‘Git up; git up an’ defen’ yo’s’e’f, boy!’” Did Pom mutter this as he thought again of Carr asleep within the little house, defenseless

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and unsuspecting, or did he only think it?

However this may be, beneath the power of the achieved idea, awing and revealing, his doubts fell away and he knew the moment was gone; knew that it no longer was possible for him to take advantage of his friend.

He turned away, some force stronger than himself impelling him, some definite and irresistible power lending him the virtue, and providing him the courage, to face the return to his own home, and there await the fulfilling of his doom.

His doom! Slow-arriving and protracted! He saw, in hideous recession, the long days and the longer nights of Adele's cruel journeying, stretching back to the piteous start. And he staggered as he stumbled toward the path leading from Carr's door.

Then he stopped, drawing himself suddenly up and standing erect! There was a speedier way to meet this doom! There was a way to

Pom

end the dark business and have done with it quickly, and at the same time forever block a renewal of to-night's temptation to pass the tricking on, should this assail him again with to-morrow's, or with the next day's dawning! He looked about him fearfully, so did it actually seem to him that he heard again the melancholy voice of his Uncle Nathan setting forth the conditions and the terms of this swifter way:

"Burn the cantrap that hez tricked you, an' you burn with it; drown it, an' you drown with it; bury it, an' you dig yo' own grave."

Pom, standing before his friend's door, gulped a great sob, as this solution opened to him.

"Gawd," he cried to the stars, and turning fled from the house, through the gate and back along the way he had come, turning at the bend of the creek and forgetful of a lifetime's fear of the spot, forgetful of his terrors

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of the morning, conscious only that his flight was to her he ever had turned to, he took the path up the hill to a rude stone-wall and a gate, beyond which lay a new grave amid many graves.

“Sleep, Sister, sleep well to-night, Adele!”

Here she lay, beneath a testimony of fading flowers, mother, aunt, counselor and provider, the being who in all of life meant most to him. He fell on his knees beneath the heavens and beside her, and began to tear at the ground with his bare hands, working madly.

It was the second grave that Pom had dug within the cycle of the hours. This time it was a wee grave, large enough only for a criss-crossed package and requiring merely that the turf be loosened and lifted, the object placed within the excavated space, and as quickly covered by the replaced sod. A quickly completed grave it proved to be by the sleeping Adele's side.

Pom

Bury your cantrap, and you dig your own grave!

Pom then flung himself on the ground beside Adele also, past further thought, past present fear, conscious only of a joy, confused and inexplicable, that he should be here thus near his aunt, in this his final hour as he believed it. And inert and exhausted he went to sleep.

.
Day was breaking when he awoke, the fields and pastures which stretched away in the landscape, and the winding creek and its wooded banks, emerging through the cold white dawn. The east, which had paled, warmed to yellow, to daffodil, to rose. The valleys and the hills deepened to purple.

Pom stood up, a stolid figure. Slowly he took in the scene, the dawn, the grave-dotted hillside, and his presence here safe and unharmed upon it, the glow within him of sud-

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den comprehension being as irradiating as the light from the rising sun which now was flooding the awakened world.

Then he flung his arms above his head, cried out, and fled down the hill.

.
Some hours later on in the morning, Pomeroy, trudging along the pike on his way to town, met Carr. The black youth had on his second-best coat in deference to the fact that he was going to town to report for his day's work on the roads.

The yellow boy, pausing as he viewed the other, and divining his purpose and his destination, jeered.

"What's the matter wi' yo', fool-boy, goin' in at the first call? If they want me, they got to say so agin. Ain' yo' never goin' to reco'nize you'se free as the white man?"

Pomeroy, pausing in his turn, looked at his friend. The glow of an inner comprehension

Pom

after the rayless night of a lifetime still was dazzling him.

But how convey any of this to another? Speech as a medium for expression was not given to Pom. He looked at Carr a second time, and as helplessly. Then he turned and went on his way, his hand, as he rounded a bend in the pike, following its habit in moments of its owner's embarrassment and seeking his coat-pocket, to close upon, and then to bring to view, the mate of the folded and criss-crossed packet that it had found yesterday in the church in the pocket of its owner's Sunday-coat.

As Pom's great fingers closed upon this second package, convulsively crushing it without being aware that they did, and breaking the wrappers, the aromatic odor of gum-camphor assailed his nostrils.

Rigid for but a moment, he then moved, looked to heaven, and shouted and cried aloud

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in great guffaws and hallelujahs as is characteristic of the race when suddenly overjoyed.

As suddenly he stood rigid again, with great tears streaming down his face. These carefully wrapped and tied little bundles, found by him in the pockets of his two coats, were the last act of loving care for him by the dying Adele, the proof of her zeal to the end, the careful housewife distributing her precious camphor among the clothes of her husband and her foster-son.

“ ‘Where moth an’ rus’ corrup’,’ I reckon it’s my fav’rite tex’,” he seemed to hear her say. And with this, and for all time, he saw her on her hillside, not the victim of malicious and secret practices and arts, but the common sharer of the common fate.

“Praise Gawd, praise the Lord,” he cried, through his gulps, to heaven.

He came to himself. He must get along to town, and to the court-house.

Pom

Free? He had heard the word all his life, but he knew it now for himself.

Free? Could it be that he knew the word even better than Carrson appeared to understand it? Again the big and husky black boy shouted to heaven. For he knew *he was free*.

THE SLEEPING SICKNESS

SHE had nursed their sick for the white people of the locality for years, going to them when they sent for her which indeed was whenever there was illness in a white household.

It was a sparsely-settled district in the Southern piney-woods, a region exploited for a time by the lumber-jacks who when they had reduced it to a country of tree-stumps departed for new fields, a neighborhood of small holdings where the planters never seemed to get ahead, or the colored renter either, whose race outnumbered the white people three to one.

She probably had a natural aptitude for nursing and had been trained in slave-times

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to her business of a mid-wife. She held her license to practice now, forty-three years later, and was regarded highly by the two white physicians of the community who in every emergency of pain and illness sent for her, the trained nurse being as yet an unprocurable quantity here. The neighborhood, white and black, spoke of her always as Angey, her name being Angelique Farrar.

She had an unerring eye for symptoms and an unfailing tenderness for suffering, and had been heard to say that she could not remember when she was not beside some sick pallet or within the room of some convalescent. The white women of the region esteemed her greatly, they being the wives of poor planters as a rule, with little money to count on, and often postponed sending for the doctor until her ministrations had been tried.

The moment the doctor arrived, however, Angey fell back, the obedient and silent as-

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sistant. She had her rejoinder always ready when her white patients twitted her with this and uttered it dryly.

"De lead steer gits de mos' cussin' when de hill prove steep."

She had an amazing acquaintance with the growing things of the region, herbs and roots and shrubs, and the two doctors frequently discussed with her the use she made of these among her race. She had her name for each, and they had theirs, hers being the local term, homely and familiar, and theirs the pharmaceutical or botanical designation. Often some younger white person would ask her how she came by her knowledge of all this.

"Hed to hev it, ma'am," she would explain. "Whut white doctor is a-comin' out f'om town till he gits good an' ready ef he comes a-tall, six mile, eight mile, fo'-teen mile into de piney-wood or to de up-country 'long de creek, at de call of a nigger-fambly? Tell me thet?"

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Angelique, she gits there so fur ahead uv de doctor she jes' got to know some'n' uv whut she about, or no need fur her gittin' there a-tall."

But after *it* happened she never came to these white homes again. As to whether her grandson was the guilty man white opinion in the community is at variance to this day. And no negro has been heard to speak on this subject, heard, that is to say by any white person. When suspicion pointed to Kingsley Farrar, the grandson, why or wherefore need not to be entered into here, Angelique, his grandmother, brought the boy into town to the sheriff herself, driving in with him from her little cabin in the clearing in a wagon and behind a mule borrowed by her for the purpose from a black neighbor.

The boy had not always been a comfort to Angey who had raised him, being lazy and disinclined to keep a steady job. The grand-

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mother believed very strongly that he was innocent of the crime now pointing toward him but reminded him that his past conduct invited this suspicion.

"It comes back to me at times sech ez this, Kingsley, son, whut my own mammy used ter say to us chil'ren ez we crowded eroun' her waitin' foh de pone en de 'taters ter git done whut wuz a-cookin' in de ash. 'Yo' tromple on my foots an' my skirt-tails now,' says Mammy, 'en' when yo' gits bigger you'll tromple on my heart.' "

The sheriff to whom she took the boy was the grandson of the white master to whom Angelique had belonged when she was a slave, she having been a woman past thirty when freedom for her people came. The sheriff was not the grandsire,—the stock has not invariably held its own with these old families,—but he was the best of anything white she had a claim upon for her to turn to.

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"It aint de law foh my boy I'm afraid of, Mr. Tom," Angey explained to the white man. "En' it ain't de thought uv de law whut is mekin' de boy look ez yo' kin see he duz. It's de fear uv de lack uv de law wi' both uv us."

The grandson, a youth of twenty, and a peculiarly rich shade of black, in truth was ashy, the horrible pallor of a black skin turned gray.

The next morning this boy whom Angelique had put into the sheriff's keeping was found hanging to a telegraph pole at the edge of town, with his body filled with bullets.

The white men of the community held that it was because of their women they took the law into their own hands. These white women, however, may have had their own opinion about this; there is a showing of the primitive in the white man every now and then, an outcropping of ferocity, which a women prefers to forget.

This act of their husbands and their male

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kindred directly affected the comfort and well-being of these women too. Each time a thing of this nature occurred in their part of the world, servants became a little less responsive, a little less satisfactory, and a little more difficult to obtain. In this especial connection these planters' wives lost the services of Angelique, who never came to one of them again.

She never declined out and out to come, never gave a direct refusal. Her excuses were plausible.

To one she would urge that the grapes upon her little hillside were ripe, and she was busy with her home-made wine, which was excellent, and which brought her in a good revenue. To another she would say that she was promised to go to her cousin's daughter whose time was due and overdue. Or in answer to some other she would reply that she was just leaving for the up-country to visit her own sister.

Oh, Angelique was discreet! She probably

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never made an impolitic speech to a white person in her life. The white neighborhood was familiar with many of her sayings, which often were trenchant and pithy. In the face of her present discretion, a favorite utterance with her, proffered to many a white child in her time, recurred to these white women now.

"Ef thet body don' learn to govern thet tongue, de time's a-comin' when thet tongue is a-goin' to bring trubble on thet body."

She had other sayings of similar import, long familiar to her white friends. "Keep yo' tongue in yo' teef!" "Hear en not hear." "See en not see."

On one occasion and one only, she did speak out and to the point, making a direct reference to what had occurred. This was when her best friend among the white women came in person to beg her to be with her in her approaching accouchement.

Old Angelique lifted her head, making no

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excuses this time nor hedging herself about by any imaginary inventions. She looked at Adele Pomfret, not with her usually watchful bright gaze, but with eyes of meaning and melancholy.

“Ma’am! When yo’ gits yo’ han’ in a lion’s mouth, pat him en rub him till yo’ git it out; but don’ yo’ put it in any mo’.”

She looked up again at her young white visitor, a quick second after this first speech. “Puttin’ it anudder way, I might say thet a mouse ought to be a fus’-rate han’ to keep away f’om cat-tracks.”

.
Phoebe Pierce, a granddaughter of Angelique, and the sister of the dead boy, lived with her husband and her three children in a small house on a piece of ground rented from a young white planter and his wife, and adjoining their own homestead. These Palfreys were remotely connected with Angel-

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ique's former white master, and therefore with this master's grandson, the sheriff, who just had been reelected to his office by a large white vote.

Phoebe, a still young woman, was capable and industrious, and an excellent wife and mother, in appearance being marked with that creaminess of skin which goes with freckles on a mulatto. Mrs. Palfrey, the white neighbor, remonstrated with Angelique, the grandmother, about the granddaughter's determination not to be friendly.

"Her three little boys and my one spend their days playing together in my yard or in theirs. But Phoebe won't be friendly. I offer her milk, and she never comes to get it, and berries from the patch which she won't come and pick. She lives to herself too much anyhow, I don't believe it's good for her. It isn't for anybody."

Angelique's old face was passive. "I reckon

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whut yo' say is so, ma'am; a pusson *kin* study too hard, kin git their min' too devoted to whut's trubblin' it."

Mrs. Palfrey insisted on her point. "You must reason with her, Angey, you must make Phoebe see it will be better for her and for her husband too, if she is more friendly with her white neighbors."

The face of the older woman never changed by so much as a flicker of an eyelid. "Yes'm, I reason wi' Phoebe now. I says to her on'y jes' de other day, 'Wuk foh de good will uv people whut has de whip-han' ober yo', daughter; it ain' no harder wu'k than wu'kin' for their bad will.'"

.
Shortly after this conversation between Angelique and the white neighbor of her granddaughter,—Johnnie, the only child of the Palfreys came along the road to the Pierce cabin one early morning hunting companionship.

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He was seven and Phoebe's three boys were seven, five and three.

He put his small face to the opening between two palings of the picket fence which was neatly white-washed, and called. In general the best-humored of chubby and busy little chaps, with round eyes as blue as myrtle-flowers, and rounder red cheeks, there was no mistaking that he was peevish to-day, if one judged him by his tones.

He had got up wrong, absurd and lovable little fellow; had drawn his ridiculously small trousers, made of blue jeans these were, rear-side to the fore onto his solid little members and fallen into a fury in consequence; had sassed his own mother; been impertinent to the cook; and flung himself finally out of the house in a whimpering tempest.

"Joshuay," he called now through the fence; "Eph'um!"

No answer came from the other side.

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His plaintive wail, injured and full of grievance generally, rose and fell.

The cabin-home within the white-washed inclosure was a thrifty-looking place. A few hens loitered about the yard which was neat and clean. There was a well-sweep at one side of the house underneath a great pecan-tree, and on the other side behind a fence of its own was a small barn with a loft bulging with cow-pea hay.

A little caravan came around the side of the cabin in response to the white child's call. The head of the procession was Joshuay, a round and solid little fellow himself, chocolate-brown. Eph'um followed, the spit of his older brother, hauling in a little home-made cart, the smaller Jeff who was named for his dark-skinned father and was light-skinned like his mother.

Usually the four played together most amiably, absorbed and untiring. To-day if John-

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nie was peevish and inclined to whimper, Joshuay was a thunder-cloud. The happiest and jolliest of little black boys as a rule, often stopping short and through an excess of sheer good spirits jigging where he stood, his bare feet shuffling and his white teeth shining, his ire to-day stood ready to out-distance Johnnie's peevings.

"What for didn't you come when I called you?" the white child demanded truculently.

Gloomy Joshuay went promptly into a rage, stammering and spluttering in his outraged indignation. "Aint we come? Aint we-uns hyere? Wha—what yo' think de matter wi' yo', white chile?"

Chubby Johnnie picked up a short length of scantling lying nearby, the group were standing outside the paling fence on the roadside now, and smote Joshuay over the head. Joshuay recovering himself from the staggering impact, up with a pink-palmed brown hand

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and smacked Johnnie resoundingly. The inference to be drawn from all this being that neither Johnnie Palfrey nor Joshua Pierce were well.

By night this fact concerning the white child was discovered by his household, who by morning sent for the doctor. Late this same day when Joshua came into his parents' cabin and curling up on the bench by the door and going to sleep, refused to be aroused, relapsing stupidly and inertly at each attempt made to do so, Phoebe his mother sent for Angelique, the child's great-grandmother.

Angey arrived by sun-up the next morning, having eight miles to travel on foot to get here, a bent but still spry bronze-black old woman. She was panting from the exertion of her early journeying.

As she passed the Palfrey house, a frame-dwelling painted white and sitting back in the yard away from the road, the horses and bug-

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gies of the two doctors of the locality, Dr. Ben Chisholm and Dr. Willie Gatewood, were hitched to the fence. Angey in her starched cotton dress and white head-handkerchief and a basket on her arm, went by silently but with watchful bright eyes.

Miss Janie Palfrey, the mother of the sick white child, had sent her husband in the buckboard at midday yesterday the eight miles to Angelique's cabin, to beg her aid in nursing the little fellow. Angelique, so it had proved, had a woeful misery in her leg which prevented her doing more than hobble about her own little house, and therefore could not come. Yet this morning following she was here padding swiftly along the sandy road past the Palfreys' at the call of her own flesh and blood.

Angelique had given her old heart early to this Joshua, the eldest of her half-dozen great-grandchildren. She was a shrewd appraiser

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of character and rated the cheerful little black boy high.

"Dat Joshuay's de smartes' pickaninny bo'n in dese yere parts in a season o' Sundays," was her judgment.

Phoebe Pierce met her grandmother at the cabin-door. Her light-skinned face with its freckles akin to those upon a turkey-egg was very anxious. She gave her bulletin as quickly as possible.

"He thet limp en soaked wi' sleep, Granny, I'm skeered erbout him. Jeff, his pappy, shake him, en I shake him, en he open his eyes en go right back asleep like he wuz afore. Jeff is waitin' eroun' outside some'eres now to git Dr. Ben to come in en see him when he gits th'ough at the Palfreys'. But I says to Jeff, hits his granny ez will know whut to do foh him when she gits hyere."

Angelique was laying off her shoulder-cape and opening her basket. Unrolling a bundle

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she took forth and tied on a big-skirted white apron.

"Nobody aint got it all, Phoebe daughter; no one pusson, nor no two pussons ain't got ev'eything; it teks a whole lot uv pussons, it teks de whole worl' to mek wisdom."

Dr. Ben the older doctor and Dr. Willie the younger man were slow to declare themselves in the case of either the white child or the black. A common cause had eventuated in a similar condition. By a process of elimination as the symptoms succeeded one another, they might arrive at a conclusion.

Angelique on her part never hesitated in her diagnosis. "Joshuay is got de sleepy-sickness. I hev heared it called de dropsy-sickness too in my young day. Slave-niggers brung it over wi' 'em in dere time in de ships whut fotched 'em hyere. I aint nebber seen it sence slave-days till now, but I knowed it soon ez I looked at Joshuay."

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She did not intrude this opinion on the doctors, however, moving about the cabin silently at their bidding when they appeared, and keeping her counsel only with Jeff and Phoebe.

The pellets and powders left by Dr. Ben she put upon the shelf after he was gone, and taking up a basket and a knife went out herself. She was gone full two hours, mentioning to Phoebe later that her quest had taken her as far as the bayou at the mouth of the south creek. When she did return her basket was filled with the grass-like blades tipped with blue-eyed blossoms and the finger-thick ochre-tinted roots of the plant she called feverweed. She talked to her granddaughter as she moved about the kitchen cleaning and steeping these roots.

“An ol’ up-country Injun-woman walked in at my marster’s plantation one day en save half de niggers he owned ob de sleepy-sickness dis

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same way. I were er half-grown wench-girl den nursin' at de quarters 'mong de sickbeds."

.

The day on which Johnnie Palfrey died, presumably of some obscure form of slow typhoid, though neither doctor would commit himself to this,—that absurd wee soul erstwhile so busy and so pre-occupied with the business of infinite play, and now lying small and still within his parents' dwelling-house,—the '*sleepy-sickness*' which held little Joshua Pierce in its lethargic stupor gave way before the out-pouring and drenching sweat that seized the child. Old Angelique came forward to meet stout and elderly Dr. Ben as he entered the cabin-door.

"I done save him, doctor," she told him, and opening the drawer of an old chest brought forth the medicines which had been left with her for the child from time to time.

"I ain't nebber crossed my will wi' any doc-

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tor's will befo' tell dis hyere present time, but dis wuz my own gran'-daughter's chile, en I resked it."

.

The morning that Angelique went home to her own cabin in the piney-woods, leaving Joshuay languid and thin but playing with his brothers again in the yard and the sunshine, she met Miss Janie Palfrey face to face in the road before the latter's gate. Mrs. Palfrey looked white and young and infinitely piteous in her new black. She stopped and spoke.

"You saved your own, Angelique, but you saw mine die! I would have come to you on my knees if I had known, if I had known!"

Angelique set her basket down upon the road, placed her bundle upon it, and straightened her body, looking at Mrs. Palfrey out of her steady-gazing little black eyes.

"Lemme learn yo' some'n', Miss Janie. Wu'k foh de good-will uv de colored folks in

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case de time come yo' gwine ter need it; it aint no harder wu'k dan wu'kin' foh dere ill-will."

Angey brought her one brown hand sharply down upon the waiting palm of the other.

"Who gwine ter be so sure in their min' thet Angey did cure li'l Joshuay? Answer me thet, ma'am. Mebbe it jes' wuzn't come Joshuay's time to die. Lookin' at it anudder way, supposin' thet Angey hed come to yo' house like yo' asked, en hed 'speriment wi' yo' chile an yo' chile die? Whut would hev happen then to Angey? Whut white pusson would hev b'lieved Angey did her bes'? Answer me thet?"

The little black eyes blazed somberly. "Angey put herse'f once afore in de white folks' han's in the hour of her 'stress ez yo' kno'. She put herse'f en' she put her gran'-chile in de keepin' uv her ole Marster's gran'son. Yo' want to know whut her 'sperience thet she got

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f'om thet teached her, Miss Janie? It teached her this: *When yo' gits yo' han' in er lion's mouth, pat him en' rub him tell yo' git it out: but don't put it in any mo'."*

FIRE FROM HEAVEN

IF Prometheus, that well-intentioned Titan, hanging in his chains against the Caucasian cliff and hurling toward Heaven the defiance of a spirit sustained by the righteousness of its cause, had moments of doubt, it must have been when his gaze fell earthward and he saw certain of his pigmy brethren, torches in hand, stumbling in the blinding light of the fire from Heaven which they carried, at once their bewilderment and embarrassment.

We will say her name was Docia. She came to our country community seeking domestic employment. She was a mulatto, just past twenty, a delicate-looking girl with eyes full of melancholy, discouragement and tenacity. Her voice was soft and held to a monotone

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and she had a slight lisp in her speech which slurred her words rather than impeded them. Her vocabulary was astonishing. She came to our neighborhood from an institution for the betterment and teaching of her race, a school which truly and in the highest sense may be said to stand a Promethean altar to its people, where each may fire his or her own torch of self-enlightenment.

But poor, slight little Docia! She carried hers so loftily and fanatically high that its light blinded her, and she banged against the mundane things of everyday earth to her own bruised hurt and the oft-demolishment of the mundane matters. This literally, for in her two months with us, she broke the equivalent of six months' wages had it been counted against her, as indeed she herself proposed and insisted on. She was high-minded and high-principled.

"After a certain fair proportion is put down

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to natural wear and loss," she said concisely and earnestly, "the rest should be paid for out of my wages."

In that case Docia, under the ancient régime now happily past, would have ended so far in our debt that the debtor's prison must have swallowed her up for aye.

She applied for the place as cook to my household. She had served as house-girl to one family in the neighborhood before coming to me. She was ladylike in her manners and while very shabby, was quiet in her dress; in personality she was rather distressing by reason of her nervousness and intensity.

I went to the telephone and called the neighbor. She had nothing to argue against Docia except a certain dazed bewilderment in her own mind concerning her.

"She is odd," was the neighbor's way of putting it, "but in intentions and principles she is all right. The trouble probably was

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with me. I have nothing to urge against her, except I confess I do not understand her."

I returned to the girl.

"What do you pay for the position of cook?" she in turn asked me.

I replied. The sum was the average maximum paid in the community for skilled service.

She demurred, quietly and with perfect respect, but with finality. "If that is the usual price, I am worth more, since I come from the school. My loyalty to what it is accomplishing, requires that I keep the standard of prices up for those of us who fit ourselves for better service. Coming from that institution I am worth more."

Open to conviction, even willing to be sanguine about it, I agreed to try her at her own valuation.

"Are you a graduate?" I inquired.

"No; I broke down my last year, and will

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have to return to finish. I had a more than ordinarily bad case of nervous prostration."

"From overstudy?"

"And insufficient food and neglect when I was young." She said it quietly, as a fact, without self-pity or ostentation. "I was hungry up to the time I was fifteen. It all culminated last year in a breakdown."

"You were preparing yourself to be a cook?"

She was quick to disclaim this. "Oh, no."

"You were studying domestic science as a whole, perhaps?"

"No. I am only taking service now as a means to an end. I want to return to finish my academic course. After that I will make my final choice in a profession. I had thought of hair-dressing or of millinery and again of dressmaking. But they told me domestic service would be better for me right now to restore my health, and then, too, it will enable me to earn my living until I can return to school. I

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came where I heard wages in the South were highest."

"But," doubtfully from me, "you know how to cook?"

"I have studied the science of it," said Docia earnestly; "I am now putting it into practice."

It was a doubtful experiment but the girl interested me as well as appealed to me in being so far from her home and apparently without acquaintance in the neighborhood.

She came at once. Indeed she had no other place to go. She had no working dresses, no aprons, no umbrella, no rubbers, no really whole shoes.

"As a house-girl my felt shoes and dresses and white aprons were furnished me by Mrs. Byrd," she explained. Which was true; and indeed, whatever she came to be supplied with in my house in any way came from me. Nor did I ever succeed in getting her to buy herself one thing. That she owed me anything

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in appearance in return for maximum wages, she could not see. She hoarded her money to parsimony, except that it was being saved for the highest motive she knew of, her return to school. She really had an insufficiency of underclothing and the weather was raw and cold. That we bestowed upon her she was grateful for, kept in order and washed faithfully. She did, however, have a good Bible, a Milton's "Paradise Lost," a copy of "David Copperfield," and an "Up From Slavery," all, as you know, good books.

She told me she read them constantly, and while the volumes were neat and clean and cared for, they looked as if she did. What part she grasped of the Milton, or of a social life so different from anything she knew as in "David Copperfield," I cannot claim to know. She also asked permission to take books one at a time from our shelves, which was given. To my knowledge in no case did she ever take a

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volume of fiction with the exception of "Pickwick Papers." If she brought to its reading the serious intensity of purpose with the entire absence of humor which she did to everything else, one wonders what she made of Samuel Weller. Poor Docia! A volume of Whittier's poems, it recurs to me, was the book she kept longest.

She came to me on the day of her arrival after putting her few possessions about her room. "Am I to be allowed to systematize my work according to my ideas? Or must I work according to your way?"

I met her half way, my difficulty being to curb my pleasure at this sign of initiative on her part. I determined she should prove herself without handicap. "Certainly you may do the work your own way; all we require in the family is results."

But, alas! she proved at the start to be singularly deficient in manual dexterity, as well

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as in the simplest mechanical sense. She did not kindle a successful fire in her stove the time she was with me, nor could she learn to manage the draughts and dampers. Finally the man servant was directed to aid her in these details.

From the first meal doubts arose, heavy and lowering, as to the science of cooking as practically applied by anxious, conscientious Docia. She confessed entire ignorance as to the making of beaten biscuits and quick-yeast substitutes were the compromise for this first meal. At the end of it she came to me more distressed than I could have been possibly, even bad as I had to confess the biscuits, which were heavy and uneatable.

"I had not calculated on the sudden heating of the oven after they were in," she explained earnestly and anxiously, "and it generated too much carbolic acid—the gas, you know, which is formed in the dough by the

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action of the cream and the tartar and the soda."

My poor, human Docia, even further incapacitated by the additional loss of energy which went in holding her torch aloft!

Dripped coffee was new to her, but she said that if we would explain the physical laws by which it worked she was sure she could make it.

Yet to Docia these principles placed the responsibility onto the workings and laws of Nature and seemed to her to remove all idea of personal responsibility in the matter from herself.

"Above a certain temperature ice always melts," she told me, not argumentatively nor impertinently but rather patiently, as with one who states facts, when I one morning showed her the refrigerator door open, evidently overnight and the ice-box empty.

To fathom her ability and resources, it was

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suggested she prepare a dessert she could make. She advocated gingerbread. To encourage her the suggestion was adopted.

It developed that she preferred the recipe in use at her institution of learning rather than the one used by my household. She was politely, pathetically, fanatically obstinate in these matters.

"I committed to memory the recipes in use there," she assured me; "they are scientifically tried and tested. For gingerbread the rule was twelve pints of molasses, twelve eggs, twelve teaspoonfuls of ginger, six cups of sour milk, thirty pints of flour, twelve teaspoonfuls of saleratus dissolved in——"

"But, Docia, with five in the house and three in the kitchen we only need gingerbread for eight——"

"Our rule was for seventy-five," said Docia with patient calmness; "it only requires that I should divide seventy-five by eight, and put

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the result into the whole. It will give me the proportions."

I had agreed to allow her to prove herself her own way. I left her. Whatever the result of $\frac{7}{8}$'s put into the recipe calling for, say, twelve eggs, resulted in as to figures, the result in gingerbread was failure. Yet she had done her earnest best. The man-servant told us that she had figured on a sheet of brown wrapping paper for an hour. I did not doubt it. In the matter of sour milk alone I should probably have figured an hour or so longer, being weak at figures. My only motive in allowing her to ruin the gingerbread was the hope that failure might leave her open to reason from me or other members of the household.

She came to me her second day with news of a bowl of some value being broken—poor, nervous creature, with thin hands that twitched in spite of themselves. "The inability of the

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outside of the glass to contract as rapidly as the inside when I put the hot water in caused the bowl to break," she told me with distress.

"You have studied something of physics?" I asked her, divining as much from her terms, however mixed.

"My uncle is the gentleman professor of certain of the sciences in the school," she replied with a pride in the statement.

Gentleman professor! It was the characteristic touch of her race in her at last. And yet not characteristic of only *her* race either. As she used the expression there sprang to my mind the case of a classmate in the public school I attended in my day. She it was I had been trying to recall ever since my first acquaintance with poor Docia. For there are Docias in all classes and colors of the human race, who are victims to well-meaning systems which endeavor to cut all that come their way to one pattern.

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In the case recalled of the classmate, the unhappy victim's name was Beatrice, with the emphasis, earnestly insisted on by herself, on the *at*. She used to explain this, after some mental process evidently clear only to herself, by saying her mother had named her out of a book she had read. She also told us that since she would have to earn her own living, she was being educated by her mother to be a "lady teacher."

"Why not a gentleman one?" I remember the class wit flippantly asked her; "you are assured of more salary from the start." But, as I also recall, nobody laughed, the extent of the inability of poor Beatrice to see the joke robbing the matter of any humor and making it even cruel. And now that I come to think about it, we did not laugh in the family over Docia and the gingerbread at the time. The tragic intensity of the affair to her robbed it of any hilarity.

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And in both these cases the conscientiousness of the victims kept them stupid. The mind of the Anglo-Saxon Beatrice was so obedient to the rule laid down, she was literal to a maddening degree. I well remember her arising in class one day with her paper in English in her hand. The requirement was to give the word, its definition and a sentence illustrating this meaning.

"Dishabille," read the patient, faithful Beatrice; "an undress. Illustration: The soldiers gave a dishabille parade."

"Concomitant; one who accompanies. He played the concomitant to her song."

So why should one be harder on the patient, striving Docias or on the patient teachers of the patient race of the Docias? For my Anglo-Saxon Beatrice and my Negro Docia remain in my mind as absolutely similar types. Whether the indiscriminating processes that produced the unhappy two are similar in their

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well-meaning blindness, I have no way of determining.

The next step in my household with Docia was that she was removed from the practical application of the science of cooking and taken into the house for trial as house-girl. We had come really to take her case to heart.

First, however, I went to that neighbor whom she had served in this capacity. The report was scarcely satisfactory.

"The only objection I have to urge is so absurd," Mrs. Byrd assured me; "it sounds more like I was at fault to have allowed it. At dinner one evening the conversation turned on that hardly allowable topic for table talk, leprosy, by reason of a recent tragedy in the papers."

I nodded.

"Just as the coffee was served Docia disappeared. Needing her for some trifle, I touched the bell and touched it again; then

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again. No Docia. Following another and more imperative ringing, my cook appeared at the pantry door.

“‘No’m, she ain’t in the kitchen and she ain’t in the pantry, neither,” she assured me in an aggrieved whisper.

“Investigation discovered her in the library on her knees before a bookcase. I must state, however, that she had asked permission to use a book at a time when she came. She explained anxiously and hurriedly when I appeared:

“‘The subject of leprosy is new to me, and we are taught and urged to inform ourselves at once on any subject of which we are ignorant. I have been looking up leprosy in the encyclopedia.’

“It was about this we parted. She could not see why I objected, not to her consulting my books, but to her doing so at such a time. She left me, feeling that I held her desire to inform herself against her.”

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Poor Docia! If her little learning had not made her quite mad, it came near rendering so those employing her. One never knew where these axioms of her learning were to be applied next.

At a summer luncheon given during her stay with us, and at which she was allowed to assist in the serving, a ghastly wait occurred owing to an absence of knives. And yet a last survey of the table that morning had shown every detail as it should be. Midway of the meal, as a course was placed before the guests, a thunderstorm broke, and the maids hurried to assist in closing the windows in all directions against the sudden driving deluge of rain.

It was just here the lack of the needful implement was discovered and the guests and the helpless hostess sat and waited. It should be explained that a small steel-bladed knife had been the implement provided. When at last the maids returned it was after

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another wait that they brought, not the steel knives, but the silver ones from a former course, warm with the evidence of having been washed for the purpose and returned—that keenest mortification in the experience of a house-keeper.

Later as the guests were trooping out to the porch, I managed to question Docia.

“It was threatening to storm,” she said earnestly, “and I took them off before you and the ladies came in. Steel, we are taught, is dangerous to handle when there is lightning.”

The rock of our final disagreement on which we split, proved to be the one called individual liberty of action. Just as she claimed to know the science of cooking but not its application, she felt she was versed in the theory of house-work. Only, again, she could not do the work. Nor could one teach the poor girl anything in this department either. She was quietly, tenaciously, maddeningly obedient to

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the only guidance she knew, the tenets of her institution's teachings *as she had grasped them*. I found these lines written out and pinned on the door of her room after she had gone, and I fairly wept over them:

"A servant with this clause,
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and th' action fine."

And yet she could not manage to thoroughly clean one room a day! Or, rather, she would not confine her energy to one room a day.

"We were taught that by concentration we economize labor," she explained. And so every piece of glass or bric-à-brac in the several bedrooms would appear in collection and confusion in some one spot to be washed one day; and every rug from every source would be concentrated for cleaning purposes on another. In other words, no one spot was ever in complete order at any one time during

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Docia's administration. A general stir up and chaos followed her footsteps. Indeed, the family or the servants generally had to fall to and help her achieve any sort of restoration at all.

"I shall have to have matters done my way, Docia," finally I said, after allowing her full opportunity to prove herself. "Results hardly justify your way, do you think? I have written out the rules by which the work usually has been done and will give them to you. This will be pleasanter for you than to be shown. I think you will find it much easier and your hours shorter this way."

"It is a question of more than myself," said she quickly and trembling in her intensity; "it is a question of the welfare of my race. We can only develop as we exercise individual liberty of action. We have obeyed and done by rote too long."

"As my servant you are free to do my work

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in your way, only so long as the work does not suffer," I tried to show her, the more that I caught the girl's point of view at this and saw that she had an idea behind her course of action; "but it has suffered. By letting us teach you now, you will be more competent hereafter to manage for yourself."

I gave her the rules for the future and matters went along sullenly for some days. Then I was obliged to speak concerning a transgression which had repeated itself on successive days.

"Docia," I said as gently as possible, "I notice the table-cloth and the asbestos have been left on several times between meals. I am quite sure that you did not mean to forget them."

At the moment she did not reply but later she came to me, again trembling with the intensity to which she was wrought.

"They taught us that economy is the first

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law of nature," she said; "it is wasting it to take them off the table after breakfast and put them back for lunch unless mats are to be used or a different cloth."

"Docia," I said, "this sounds like answering back. I do not care to have the cloth left on in my dining-room."

The next morning was an idyllic one in June. The car was waiting for some of the family to take an early spin. As I came down the stairs I could see through the dining-room door not only the asbestos in place but a fresh cloth and centerpiece being spread thereon by Docia. It was not yet nine o'clock. There was nothing for it but to have it out with her.

She came at my bidding to the sitting-room. Her high cheek-bones, pressing against the thin skin, her frail physique, her intensity, her melancholy eyes, stubborn though their gaze was, wrung my heart.

"Docia," I said, "let us try to understand

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one another. Do you mean to disobey me in this matter of the dining-room?"

She answered me calmly, though her poor hands, hanging at her sides, worked unhappily, and a slow and dusky color gathered under the pallor of her face. "I did it after much thought," she replied; "*it is an issue.*"

"What is the issue, Docia?" I asked, determined to do her justice by getting her point of view if possible.

"Whether I, standing for my race, am to insist on the individual liberty of action necessary for my development or by giving in, to submit to further bondage for my race."

"I am afraid this is an issue on other grounds, Docia," I said; "but before I try to assist you in finding another and the right sort of place, I would like for your own sake to make you understand this thing." And I began to state the perfectly obvious as clearly as I could.

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"In taking my money you guarantee me certain things in exchange for it, among them the execution of my reasonable wishes. In failing to execute these, you do not earn the money you bargained for. Individual liberty of action on your part, which goes counter to the wishes I am paying to have executed, is not what you bargained for. For me to forbid you to leave the cloth on your table in your house would be interference with your liberty of action, but in my house I have, through ability to pay for it, the right to have my reasonable idiosyncrasies humored to any extent for which I can give the equivalent in wages."

But poor Docia could not see this. "I stand for my race," she stated steadfastly and stubbornly; "it was an issue, the table-cloth was."

"How many homes have you had since you left the school last year, Docia?"

"Six. I came farther north this spring because I could not have individual liberty of

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action so far in the south. And wages were higher. But it is just as unfair here; there's no hope for us since there is no fairness; but," and her poor, excited voice went pitifully high, "I stand for my race—I stand for my race——"

Which brought the conversation to a close, leaving me as unnerved through pity as she through her conviction of the injustice of the race I stood for.

She went from me to a neighbor to whom I applied for her after a full discussion of the case, a woman of northern blood and affiliations, of means and of broad sympathies, a worker and an aider in various activities for the cause of women of all creeds and colors. I felt that if any one could help the poor girl to a clearer understanding she could, by reason of her predisposed sympathies and her knowledge in the practical application of such sympathies.

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Several weeks later I met her. She opened the conversation without waiting for me to ask.

"She has gone. She is a sounding cymbal of the phrase without the idea. How can we have hoped so soon to graft the reason of an adult race onto the minds of a child race? A part of the negro people, as I am beginning to realize, are not yet evolutionized out of the infancy of their race. How much happier would this poor, bewildered, conscientious, striving girl, oppressed in mind and sickly in body, be with a simple understanding of the mere a b c of learning and the dexterity of the trained manual worker. It seemed to be a part of some lofty idea with her, loyalty to her people or her school, I cannot say which, to refuse to recognize or admit her incompetency. When I insisted on the rectifying of certain matters which were her part to see to, it became a question of her liberty of action, and an issue, and Docia has gone."

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Where? I do not know, but more than once I have pictured her, drifting from here to there, unhappy, friendless in this roving pilgrimage, frail, resentful, sensitively nursing a growing idea of grievance toward us of the other race.

Poor child of a young and yet, in some ways, precocious people! It is not we who are demanding too much of you as a race too soon. It is the leaders of your race, too optimistic, too sanguine for you thus oversoon, who are urging too great things upon you too rapidly, just as the mother of the limited Beatrice cruelly imbued her with a harassing sense of her obligations to the parental expectations. The simple a b c of it honestly grasped were enough for this generation's Docias; the next step enough for the child born of a Docia; leaving time to decide the degree of progression possible for that child's child. For how many generations have been required by the Anglo-

Fire from Heaven

Saxon as a race to master the alpha of their knowledge and not be within sight of the omega by such a long way yet?

My poor Docia was young, little more than a child. By every racial instinct and right the blood of this slight girl should be quickening in some degree with the laughter, the inconsequent merriment, the light heartedness, the nimble-footedness natural not only to her youth but essentially natural to her people. After she had gone we recalled that we never had heard this young creature laugh, never had seen the dim approach to a smile on her troubled face.

MALVINEY

IT was the morning of June 5, 1917, the day of the draft. The young men of the neighborhood, white and black, were coming into the village on foot, on bicycle, in wagon and motorcar, to register. The day and the occasion alike were solemn. The church-bells had rung the call over the fields and the countryside. I, whose forbears had given lives and fortunes to war, had gone home profoundly moved.

There came a tap at my door and Malviney Burnley came in. An elderly colored woman retired from service and living in her own home in its acre of ground, the long years of her active life had been passed in my father's household, in my brother's, and in my own. A

Malviney

refined and gentle-mannered mulatto, still pretty, though with a grizzle of gray through her hair, she breathed a quiet capability.

She had emerged from youth into womanhood as I came into adolescence to be sure, but considering that she had served me and mine for the best years of her life, I did suppose that I knew her. So trim, so quiet, so conservatively the faithful servitor, I was to learn that not at all did I know the inner heart of my Malviney, nor yet the vantage-ground from which she of necessity took her point of view.

She seemed troubled this morning, and a little uncertain. Her shapely brown hands wandered along the handles of the basket in which she had brought me some eggs.

"Sit down, Mallie, get your breath and tell me all about it," I suggested, a mutual discussion of domestic affairs on both sides being the understood thing on these visits.

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"I saw the boys comin' in to put their names down, an' the young men," she said; 'boys' meaning her own race, 'young men' meaning mine.

"Yes," I answered, "it drove me home in tears."

She looked at me with a certain furtive searching at this, or so I fancied, then looked away. Her hands traveled the handles of the basket now sitting on her knees and back again.

"You should be proud, Mallie Burnley," I told her with smiling severity, "Scott has been in the army since the war with Spain, and Ephraim, after enlisting for Mexico, has gone again."

Scott is a brother, Ephraim is her only son.

In her quiet way, for her voice is always controlled, she broke forth. "It's to-day, Miss Louise, to-day has brought things back, though I can't say why. It's bes' not to re-

Malviney

member an' I don't, but seems like them boys an' young men comin' in along the lanes and the roads this mawnin' brought things back."

The brown hands still slipping along the hickory handles were trembling.

"How can I know what you mean, Mallie? Put your basket down and take off your hat—you must have had a warm walk—and tell me exactly what it is?"

"How kin I tell you exact when I don't know it thet way myse'f? It's a bit here an' a bit there. I couldn't put it together when it happened any more than I kin put it together now. It's them boys and young men tromp-in' in to put their names down brought it to me this way."

"War is a terrible thing, Malviney," I said, out of my own thoughts rather than through any connection with hers.

"You've said it, Miss Louise, you've said

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it." Her voice had sunk with her emotion and this was spoken in little more than an intense whisper. "Don't I know, don't I know my own se'f?"

"You never spoke before about the war in your childhood, Mallie; tell me now?"

"I don't know ef I kin make you un'erstand, seems like I don't un'erstand myse'f." Her hands had dropped in her lap now and her eyes, faithful eyes of hazel they were, fixed on the fields of blue-grass and the hills beyond visible through the open window, took on the look of the somnambulist. What were those eyes seeing, what recalling, that her lips trained to a life-time of silence, and her tongue schooled to restraint and reticence, did not know how to tell me?

"I don't know thet I kin make you see it like I see it, Miss Louise. There wuz seven of us thet mawnin' standin' on top of the meader-hill next to the house-yard, Marster's

Malviney

sister's four chil'run, li'l girls they wuz, visitin' at the house, an' us three. I wuz eight, Frances, my sister, wuz six, an' li'l Scott, who's been in the cavalry sence the Cuban war, wuz three. Marster's place wuz near Cleesburg, twenty miles from Adair, heah in Kentucky, yes ma'am. I don't know when it wuz, the thing I'm goin' to tell you about, nor how long the war had been goin' on. We chil'run lived in the cabin with our Mammy an' never went off the place an' so fur as I kin ricolect, I never had heerd of the word war, or knowed there wuz one. Or so it seems to me now. We wuz standin' on the top of thet hill, yes'm, the house bein' off in a clump of locust trees to the side of it, an' Marster's store, he kep' the country store, facin' on the pike in front of it.

"Standin' there we wuz when off up the pike round the bend, we saw men pourin,' an' men, an' men, an' behind them more men, comin' an' double-quick at thet I know they were

Children in the Mist

now, but I didn't know the word then. An' turnin' because we wuz frightened an' didn't know whether to run or not, we seen men comin' the other way down the pike an' through Marster's fields an' over the fences an' cross the ford at the big branch an' out of the bresh-thicket, an' more an' more men. Both ways they wuz comin', double-quick, an' we on the top of the hill between 'em. An' then—

“I've al'ays said to myse'f it wuz like fire-crackers un'er a barrel, what begun then, but somehow we seemed to know what it meant. Scott an' one of Marster's sister's littlest ones kept fallin' ez we run an' we'd have to stop an' drag 'em up. Ez we got to the yard about the house, the white folks' house I mean, not the cabin, the dawgs wuz ahead of us, yelpin' an' runnin'. Marster kept hounds, an' we follered 'em, we colored chil'run, follered 'em un'er the house which at the back wuz set up on posts 'count of the slope of the hill, with steps goin'

Malviney

up to the gallery an' the kitchen overhead. The white chil'runs mus' have gone round to the front an' been took in the house, I don't know. I an' Frances an' Scott ain't never seen them four li'l girls from thet day to this, nor knowed whut become of them. Un'er the house where we went crawlin' after the dawgs, whimperin' an' shiverin' worser than we were, wuz a box restin' on its bottom on the ground. We scurried right to thet box, we an' the hounds too, the poppin' thet wuz like fire-crackers goin' on ev-ey minute of the time outside, an' we scrouged close to it, chil'run an' dawgs. We knowed whut wuz in thet box, all of us, *Marster wuz in it*.

"Tolliver wuz Marster's name, Eli Tolliver. Miss Sally wuz his wife's name. The house an' the store an' the farm wuz hers by her first husband. Marster didn't own nothin' ceptin' through her. He hed warnin' time an' agin they'd git him yet, an' we chil'run

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knowed about the hole cut in the dining-room floor an' the box from the store let down un'er it, an' the floor made to lie back over it an' the oil-cloth to go over thet. Marster wuz in thet box, an' we an' the dawgs scrouged close to it 'cause we knowed he wuz there."

"Who wanted your master? Who had threatened to get him, Malviney?"

"I don't know, I never did know."

"On which side was he, the Union or the Confederacy?"

"I don't know thet, I don't know nothin' but jes what I'm tellin' you. I got it somehow, Mammy must have said so, thet Marster wuz both, one time to one side and 'nother time to the y'other side."

"That makes it clear, quite, and also the type of the man. Such creatures do exist. Go on with the story, Malviney."

"We scrouged there close against the box,

Malviney

me and Frances an' li'l Scott, big enough to know he mustn't cry out loud, an' he an' the hounds whimperin' soft. Noon-time come, an' af'ernoon come, an' the poppin' never ceasin'. Then by an' by it come quiet an' Marster spoke to us through the box. He told us it wuz evenin' an' we could go out now, but not to say a word to anybody where he wuz.

"We crept out, an' the hounds with us, still trimblin' an' bellyin' along the ground, you know how a hound cringes. We crept out, oh, Miss Louise——

"Yes'm. I ain't never forgot a thing of it. The sun wuz gone down an' the sky wuz a glory, the fields an' the yard an' the air full of the glory from the sky too. An' eve'ywhere wuz men, daid, though we didn't know what it meant then, in the yard, up the hill, out in the barn-lot, eve'ywhere we could see, face down, or face up, or arms flung out, men daid eve'ywhere about the place. We run to

Children in the Mist

the back steps to git up to the gallery an' the kitchen. But the kitchen gallery wuz full of men too, laid in rows, some daid an' some groanin'. We run round to the front gallery to git in at the front door, an' the front gallery wuz full of men too, laid in rows, some daid an' some groanin'. An' then the door opened an' Miss Sally's sister, Miss Emma, who lived with us, reached out an' snatched us in."

"Where was your own Mammy all this while, Malviney?"

"We didn't know then, but we knowed afterward. Mammy wuz in the air-space upstairs between the ceilin' an' the roof where they pushed her. Ef the so'jers had have found her on the place so we knowed af'erward, they'd have told her to go free."

"And then?"

Malviney's face was thoughtful.

"Thet's all to thet. I don't know how long

Malviney

it wuz to the next thing thet has stayed in my mind. Mebbe it wuz only days, mebbe it wuz weeks, mebbe months, I don't know. I woke up at night down in the cabin. I slept with Frances in the trun'le-bed what pulled out from under the bedstead, an' li'l Scott he slept in the bedstead with Mammy. But Mammy wuz up, an' the cabin wuz full of so'jers, colored so'jers. The back-log on the hearth broke an' the flames started up showin' the peppers an' the oker an' the dried apples and the sassafras sticks Mammy hed hangin' from the beams. Then I saw the so'jer whut was talkin' to Mammy wuz our Uncle Scott, Mammy's brother. He belonged to Marster Pres Buckner, the other side of Adair, good people Mammy al'ays said to us our Uncle Scott's white people wuz.

“‘Git your clothes, Fanny,’ he wuz sayin’ ‘you’s goin’ with us.’

“‘I can’t seem to git my consent to go,

Children in the Mist

Scott,' Mammy wuz sayin' back, 'I can't an' leave the chil'run.'

"'Top's waitin' for you at Adair,' Uncle Scott told her. 'You come now an' we'll git the chil'run next time. They ain't goin' to hurt the chil'run.'

"'Top wuz our Pappy, Topham Bixby. He wuz a free man, an' he hed been tryin', ever sence he married our Mammy, to buy her from Miss Sally who owned her.

"'Mammy got her things together at thet, after he said our Pappy wuz waitin' for her. Then she saw me settin' up in the trun'le-bed and Frances settin' up by me.

"'Ef you say a word they'll come an' git Mammy,' she came to us an' told us. Our Uncle Scott nodded to this an' so did the y'other so'jers. 'They'll git Mammy.'

"'We knowed what Mammy meant, we knowed we didn't belong to Uncle Scott's kind of white people.

Malviney

“ ‘Mammy’s goin’ this time,’ our Mammy wuz goin’ on sayin’ to us, ‘an’ next time Uncle Scott ’ll come an’ git you. Ef you ’low you know a thing about it, they’ll git Mammy an’ bring her back an’ you know what they’ll do to her.’

“The next thing the cabin wuz empty, an’ the next thing it wuz day. We waited, Frances an’ me, li’l Scott still asleep, holdin’ to each other, ’fraid to go up to the house, ’fraid to stay tell they come an’ found out. We heerd them callin’ Mammy to come on an’ git bre’kfus’, an’ then we heerd them comin’ to find her. Miss Emma come first an’ Miss Sally come ’long in a minit behind her. They wuz tall women, or it seems so to me now rememberin’, but Miss Emma for all she hed a birth mark on her cheek like you laid your open hand on it, wasn’t the hard one thet her sister wuz.

“ ‘Where’s Fanny?’

Children in the Mist

"Where's your mother?"

"We didn't know. Li'l colored chil'run learned young them days.

"Anybody been here to see her lately?"

"We didn't know.

"Why, her clothes is gone,' Miss Sally was pryin' around, 'did you see your mother gitten' her clothes together?"

"Mammy hed put eve'ything she hed, it couldn't have been much, in a ol' gunny-sack. But when Miss Sally ask us we hadn't seen nothin'.

"I don't know how long after that comes the next thing in my mind, which is Free Melindy, ez she wuz called, in the kitchen. They got her in Mammy's place an' us chil'run, not Miss Sally, paid for it. Yes'm'. Miss Sally, she'd tell Free Melindy, an' Melindy she'd th'ow a piece of fat meat out on the wood-pile, an' Frances an' li'l Scott an' me, we'd fling ourselves on it an' fight for it. We wuz hawngry

Malviney

day an' night, an' bein' locked in the cabin at sundown we didn't have a chance to forage for nothin'. Under our tow slips, an' Scott's tow shirt, which wuz the onliest clothes we wore, we wuz all of us a pa'cel of bones.

"The big rain-water barrel what stood under the kitchen-gallery, come empty. Reckon it wuz a dry spell. One mawnin' when Melindy come down to the cabin to let us out at sun-up, she hed two buckets.

" 'You fotch water from the cave an' pour it in the barr'l tell I say you can quit,' she said to Frances an' me.

"Up the hill an' down the y'other side an' cross the branch wuz the cave. Back where the roof begun to git low wuz the big spring what never run dry. We fotch water thet day tell we drap, an' the next day an' the next.

"Thet last day, ez I got to the barr'l I set my bucket down an' slunk 'round the house an' from bush to bush, an' then run lickety-split

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down the path to the store an' in to Marster Eli. I don't know how I dare. Not so much on account of bein' skeered of him, for we knowed Marster Eli would like to be our friend ef he could, but on account of bein' so skeered of Miss Sally ef she found out I done it.

" 'I ain't goin' to pack no more water from the cave for Free Melindy,' I told Marster Eli.

" 'What's that?'

" 'There's some'n' calls outer the woods an' then we hear the bresh snappin' an' breakin' an' we can't run fast enough 'count of the buckets bein' heavy with the water.'

" 'I'll go back with you now,' said Marster Eli; 'go and get Frances and the buckets and come along.'

" 'The three of us went up the hill an' down the y'other side an' cross the branch an' into the cave. Comin' out with the buckets there

Malviney

come the call agin, long an' mo'rnful an' th'eatenin', an' then the bresh snappin' an' the bushes breakin'.

“‘Panther-cat,’ said Marster Eli. ‘You go on up to the house, I’ll get my gun and come back again.’

“Then Frances and me, we knowed. It wuz our Pappy. He us’t for to call jest so to our Mammy an’ she’d go out in the night an’ meet him. Follerin’ along af’er Marster Eli up the hill, we looked at each other skeered.

“‘Mammy said never to tell,’ said Frances to me.

“‘Our Pappy he’s smart,’ I agreed, ‘he’ll be gone afore Marster Eli gets back.’

“‘Reachin’ the house-gate we met Marster Eli comin’ back with the gun.

“We never heerd our Pappy callin’ no more after thet, an’ thet night they took us up to the house to sleep. Reckon it wus because Miss Sally knowed we weren’t hers no longer, even

Children in the Mist

ef we didn't know it, thet she done us ez she did. The hounds, the leanest things on y'earth, an' worser war-times, wus fat ez 'possums in 'simmon-season to what we wuz. The weather come winter an' our bare heels bust right open with the cold.

"We wuz pickin' up chips at the wood-pile in the snow one day to carry in to Melindy, when we seen a ox-cart and two oxen stoppin', an' a man gittin' down an' openin' the pike-gate. The cart an' the oxen come on up to the house an' round to the back. An' in the cart wuz our Uncle Scott an' a white man in gray an' a so'jer in a blue overcoat with capes an' a gun.

"They come to git us. The man in gray wuz Mr. Pres Buckner what hed owned our Uncle Scott, come with him to see there wuzn't no trouble gittin' us. Miss Sally an' Miss Emma an' Free Melindy come out, an' Marster Eli come up from the store. I ain't never

Malviney

un'erstood it an' I reckon I ain't never goin' to. Soon ez they begun to talk about a bureau, Miss Sally an' Marster Eli give right up. What you reckon a bureau hed to do with it?"

"The Freedmen's Bureau, Mallie?"

"Mebbe 'twuz, though I don't know what thet is any more than the other.

"Take 'em and get off the place,' said Marster Eli.

"Take 'em an' good riddance,' said Miss Emma.

"Take her an' take them,' said Miss Sally pushing me toward the men who had caught up Frances and Scott and put them in the cart, 'an' git off my place with 'em too.'

"When we come to Mammy—"

"When was that?"

"I don't know.'

"Where was it?"

"I don't know thet either. We went past

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Adair an' on through Glasgow, I know thet. Afterward we an' our Uncle Scott come on to Louisville with Marster Pres Buckner an' Miss Helen, his wife, an' they helped Mammy git us raised."

"Well?"

"When we come to Mammy she come to the door of the cabin. 'Where Topham, Scott?' she ask our uncle. She meant our Pappy.

"'He got to Cleesburg last summer when he went after the chil'run, Fanny, we found thet out,' said our uncle. 'He hung around there for a time tryin' to git speech with 'em. Then nobody ain't seen nor heerd tell of him sence.'

"An' nobody ain't seen nor heerd tell of him ever 'ceptin' what me an' Frances knowed to tell. But Marster Eli he thought it wuz a panther-cat when he took his gun an' went into thet thicket; when he fired into thet bresh

Malviney

he thought it wuz a panther-cat. Frances an me knowed thet."

Malviney Burnley, elderly colored woman, stood up, trig, comely, capable, the light frost presaging age touching her head. "Well, Miss Louise, I must be gettin' 'long toward home."

I arose also and going to her seized her hands. They had laundered the garments of my girlhood, they had cooked my wedding-breakfast, they had ministered to my adult years, they had laid out my dead. They had done so much for me.

"And all this is part with you, Malviney, part and substance with you, and I, taking so much for granted, so much for granted, have never dreamed it."

I wrung her hands and pressed them to me between my own, I laid my head against her shoulder in its fresh purple calico, her shoulder

Children in the Mist

where my head had rested before but always for its own comforting, and cried. Malviney raised her head.

"Nobody knows but me," she said. "Frances is dead an' Scott wuz too little to remember. He's in the army, an' Eph's there now, too. My girl is married to a good man and her two boys does well at the school. I think of them daid laid in rows on Miss Sally's porch, but I know they ain't there now. I think of what I been tellin' you an' I know it ain't so now. Heah's how it is, heah's how it is nowadays. Scott's in the cavalry, Eph's in the army. For ev'ey white young man comin' in to put his name down this mawnin' there wuz a colored boy comin' 'long in too. Some of 'em looked scared, some of 'em looked proud."

She drew herself up, this Malviney Burnley, and her eyes and her mien threw me their proud challenge.

Malviney

"They tell me this here war we're in, this war Scott an' Eph have gone to, is to make women an' chil'run an' boys an' men free eve'ywhere. Who more obligated for to go then than these here colored boys?"

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

SHE was a tall, spare, but contagiously debonaire and gay old colored woman with gray hair, a sailor-hat, a blue coat-suit, a breast-pin full six inches long spelling "Elvira" in block letters half-an-inch tall, and a great manner. She approached the desk and the pleasant looking young person behind it.

"Calhoun, ma'am, Private Robert Sevier Calhoun, —th Infant'y, Comp'ny D, in France, he's my bus'ness, yes'm."

It developed under questioning that Elvira never had been to the Red Cross Home Service before, here or elsewhere.

"F'om Cheraw, I am, yes'm, Sou' Cal'ina. My son Robert come norf to wu'k, he is twen'y-t'ree, en he wuz drafted up hyere. He

Sixty Years After

wen' ober to thet thar France las' April."

"You have come to see something about your allotment, I suppose? Your name, please, and the name of your son again? Any minor children?"

"Ma'am?"

"Have you any children younger than Robert?"

"No, ma'am, he's my baby boy. It ain't no trouble about my 'lotment. Robert seen to thet befo' he went, en' he seen to his insurance fo' him mammy too. It's thet I ain' been easy in my min' about him, no, ma'am, I ain', en' I ain' easy in my min' now. *I ain' sayin' Robert wuz skeered, but I ain' sayin' he wuzn't.* I got another son en his wife livin' hyere in New Yo'k City, en this son writ me about a t'ing called Home Service, fo' straightenin' out the boys fo' their mothers, en bringin' 'em up to time when they need it. So I got on the train, en brung myse'f up hyere to see about

Children in the Mist

it. It seems now thar's a Home Service in thet li'l fool town of Cheraw whar I come f'om, but nobody never did tell me about it. This hyere's my trouble why I bin a fret. I ain' sayin' thet boy is skeered, en I ain' sayin' he ain', but I am sayin' I ain' gittin' the proper sattersfac'shun thet I looked fo' outer Robert's letters."

"Your son doesn't write as often as he should? Or he writes and you fail to receive the letters?"

"I ain' sayin' none o' thet." Elvira, sprightly soul, her hands encased in white cotton gloves, was fumbling in a silk bag with beaded dangles. "'Tain' thet Robert don' write, an' 'tain' thet I don' git the letters. It's thet he en his letters ain' givin' me the righ' kinder sattersfac'shun."

She handed two envelopes across the desk, folded her gloved hands upon the silk bag, and nodded in confirmation.

Sixty Years After

The young person behind the desk took a photograph from the first envelope. "Your son's picture, I see? Sit down, won't you? There's a chair behind you. Private Calhoun is quite something of a chap, isn't he? He is about the biggest and huskiest boy of his color I think I ever saw in khaki."

"Yes'm, I ain' complainin' about his size, but I am complainin' about his letters. It looks like all thet schoolin' thet I give him oughter show up bett'r then it 'pears to be doin'. T'ree months outer ebery year thet school-house doah stan' open fo' the colored folks' chil'ren, en I seed thet Robert got thar to it. I've writ to him th'ough my daughter-in-law, speakin' my min', en his brother writ, but to nary purpose ez we kin see. I come to inquire about gittin' you to write, t'inkin' thet a letter f'om you would carry author'ty. Yes'm. En to ask you when you do write, to say to thet boy Robert thet his mother ain' by no means

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gittin' her sattersfac'shun outer his letters."

Elvira's confidante behind the desk unfolded a sheet of notepaper taken from the second envelope.

WITH THE COLORS, Sept. 7, 1918.

Der Mather i got your to day. i Resce your Lyaſt letter to. was glad to here from you you here from me. i was glad to no that you are praying for me i am praying for you For myſelf And all. give my love to ſiſter brother frinds. mother dont worry aborther me. you may pray for me. dont look for much mail from me it takes a long time to get mail. good By from your ſon Robert Calhoun.

Elvira was eyeing alike ſeverely the young perſon and the letter. "Kin you mek out f'om thet letter whar thet boy's at? Or whut he's doin'? It's jes' of a piece with ebery letter he's done ſent home. I ain' claimin' he's ſkeered, or not ſkeered, but whut's he givin' himſe'f ober to ſo much prayin' fo'? Big en hefty ez he is, I looked to hear befo' this thet he wuz doin' ſome fightin'."

"Suppoſe, Elvira, we fill out this paper with

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his name, your name, and a few other facts. By means that we know of, or through the aid of his own captain, if necessary, perhaps we can get you a real chatty, newsy letter."

Elvira sitting with uncompromising erectness in her chair, seemed to be reviewing the whole matter in her mind musingly. "Thar's some'n' more'n jes' prayin' in thet boy. I looked fo' this t'ing of him gittin' ober thar to bring it out, seein' ez I hadn't seemed able to do it. 'Pears like too, he could'er said in thet letter a li'l about whut this hyere France is like, pine-barren, or cotton-country, or sugar-cane, or rice-field, or whut? I'm t'inkin' the trubble 'cross thar'll be ober with, en he won' hev tol' me nothin'. 'Tain' like he don' kno' him ol' Mammy cyant read en larn fo' herse'f some'n' about it. Down thar to my li'l place at Cheraw by myse'f, waitin' fo' Robert's letters to come, en studyin' 'bout the matter, I got plum cu'yous speculatin' jes' whut

Children in the Mist

thet baby boy uv mine is ober thar 'cross all thet water fightin' about? Huccome he in it? Whut's he a-goin' to git outer it? Huccome the Presy^dent thought enough of the black boys to tell 'em to go? Ef Robert knows, why don' he say? He didn't know at the start."

"I think, Elvira, we may assume that your son knows. And it is right that you should want to know. I am going to ask one of our visitors to call to see you quite soon, and to tell you about this. You can ask her about France also, and any other thing you want to know. Your address, please?"

The details of this over with, and the photograph and the letter restored by Elvira to the silk bag, at a proffer by the young person who now was standing by her desk, the debonair old visitor and she shook hands.

"T'ank you, ma'am, fo' sayin' thet you will write to Robert. I'll wait right erlong hyere

Sixty Years After

in New Yo'k wi' my son Pinckney, en his wife, Louisa. Thar's consider'ble mo' noise about this hyere war hyere in New Yo'k than thar wuz back yon'er in Cheraw. Seem lak the gist of the worry down thar wuz ef the Pee Dee wuz goin' to git rampag'ous en overflow she banks en wash out all she crops 'fore we git 'em safe outer the fiel's."

She up-flung her old head stiffly. "Don't aim to spare Robert, ma'am. Tell him whut I say, en whut I t'ink. Tell him he ain' come f'om no sech prayin' stock. Tel him I ain' come f'om prayin' stock neither. Say to him I wouldn't like to hev to t'ink him skeered, en thet ef he wants his Mammy to git the ease 'er min' she oughter git outer thet 'lotment he made ober to her, he'll hev to mek *his' 'titlements to it, en hers, clearer*. I'll be in again, yes'm, en I'm more'n any jes' ord'nary much oblige to you, I am indeed."

Elvira appeared again within a week. Tall,